

## Caught in the Middle (Steve Harrington x Reader x Billy Hargrove) by KiaraKohana

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Alexei (Stranger Things) Lives, Billy Hargrove Being an Asshole, Billy Hargrove Redemption, F/M, Takes place during season 3, Your life goes from worrying about love triangles to fighting the mind flayer and saving the world, reader is a good sister

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Alexei (Stranger Things), Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Murray Bauman, Reader, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Billy Hargrove/Reader, Billy Hargrove/You, Steve Harrington/Reader, Steve Harrington/You

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**Summary:**

Just before the school year begins, a new girl drives into town in a black 84' Jaguar with a New York license plate. But you weren't new to Hawkins at all. As a matter of fact, you were returning. While reunited with your old friends you soon find yourself making some unexpected new ones as well; namely the hair of Hawkins high himself and a certain hot-blooded Californian bad boy. Little did you know, dark forces are at work just beneath your feet. How the hell did you get caught in the middle of this?

## 1. .:Something Old, Somthing New:.

Nothing really changed much in Hawkins, Indiana. It was always the same people working the same jobs or going to the same high school. However one thing that was definitely different was the fact that a giant, glass-topped complex decked out in neon signs and flashing lights stood tall in the middle of town square- a stark contrast to everything else around it. Starcourt Mall looked severely out of place in your small town, but then again it had been almost six years since you've been here.

Your gaze swept over the impressive building, swarms of teenagers weaving in and out of the stores. Your eyes suddenly settled on a cute blue and white striped sign that read 'Scoops Ahoy!'

"You up for ice cream?" you asked.

"I'm down," your brother said from the passenger seat.

"Good, because I was going to pull over anyways," you grinned.

You backed into a nearby parking spot, getting out of your car and stretching out your arms. The ten hour road trip from Rochester to Hawkins did not do great things for your body or your sleep schedule, especially when you had to live off of nothing but McDonalds and 7-11 food for a few days. As ready as you were to flop face first onto your old bed, some ice cream sounded really good in the sweltering heat.

You headed into the ice cream shop as you took out your wallet, a cute little bell ringing out as you opened the door.

"Ahoy," a pretty girl with shoulder length blonde hair greeted you as you walked in. She wore a sailors uniform and hat and looked like she couldn't wait to go home. However, she seemed to regain a bit of energy as she saw you. She stared at you curiously for a moment, looking you up and down before smiling.

"Hold on just a second," she said.

“Uh, sure?” you said, a bit confused by the girl as she quickly disappeared into the back room,

“You're gonna want to take this one, Harrington,” Robin said.

“I'm on break,” Steve said, his feet up on the table.

“You've been 'on break' for over an hour, dingus,” Robin rolled her eyes, “Besides, you'll thank me later if you play your cards right.”

She reached behind the table he sat at, pulling up a white board with two columns reading 'You Rule' and 'You Suck'.

“You're 0 for 6, Popeye,” Robin said, “Let's see if you can flip the odds.”

She gestured over to the window where you stood in front of the display case, looking around for another employee. Steve seemed to perk up at the sight of you. It was a rare occurrence in Hawkins for Steve to run into someone he's never seen before, and hell if you weren't beautiful.

Robin chuckled as he shot up out of his seat, straightening out his uniform with new enthusiasm.

“Alright, I'm going in,” he said, pausing for a moment before he opened the door, “And you know what? Screw the company policy.” He took off his hat and threw it over his shoulder with a flourish, “Totally hiding my best feature.”

“Yeah,” Robin said under her breath, “*That's* what's holding you back.”

“Ahoy there!”

You nearly jumped at the overly-loud greeting you received as the door to the back room swung open, revealing a guy about your age in an equally ridiculous sailor uniform as his coworker.

“Sorry for the wait, I hope you're still available to set sail on this ocean of flavor with me. I'm your captain for today, Steve-”

"Harrington," you finished, surprising the boy behind the counter. He blinked a few times, letting his brain catch up with itself.

"Do. . . do I know you?" he asked.

"Probably not," you chuckled dryly, "We went to school together up until sixth grade, though."

"Oh," he said, feeling kind of bad. A lot had changed in the last year—mainly that he almost got killed by flesh eating beings from another dimension on no less than two accounts. But he'd also changed a lot as a person. He was one to acknowledge that he wasn't the greatest person in the past; Maybe it was better that you didn't know him in high school.

"Well, I'm sorry we didn't get to know each other back then," Steve said honestly.

That took you by surprise. This wasn't the Steve Harrington you knew. He was the King as far back as elementary school and, as far as you knew, a grade-A asshole. He seemed a lot different than when he was smacking down lunch trays in the cafeteria, but he was still just as stupidly attractive to you.

"Let's start over, then," you said, "I'm (Y/n), and this is my brother Kyle."

Steve looked over to the (h/c)-headed boy who looked only a year or two younger than you and gave him a little salute-wave.

"Nice to meet you," Steve said, "What can I get you two?"

After taking your orders Steve started scooping up the ice cream, piling them into waffle cones. As he handed you yours he seemed to hesitate before talking.

"So, are you just back in Hawkins to visit, or. . ." he trailed off.

"I'm back here as long as my dad's business is," you said, "He moved us out to New York for work, but he's setting up base back here."

"Oh, New York!" Steve said, trying to come up with something to say,

“That's, uh, the- where the Statue of Liberty is and. . . hot dogs, and. . . taxis?”

“Yeah, that pretty much sums it up,” you laughed, the sound making Steve smile.

You looked over to the wall clock and bit your lip as you saw how late in the afternoon it was.

“Hey, we have to get going,” you said reluctantly, “I still need to finish moving in. You know, unpacking everything I own and all.”

“Uh, yeah, no, I totally get it,” Steve said, mentally kicking himself as you turned around to leave.

Just before you closed the door you turned to look at him over your shoulder.

“You know, I start my senior year in a few weeks at a little place called Hawkins High,” you said.

Steve rose an eyebrow, his expression a little more hopeful, and you grinned.

“Who knows? I might see you around,” you said, a mischievous glint in your eyes.

Robin smirked as Steve watched you walk away, a little in awe.

“I like her,” she said, “Although, I'm not really sure if this one counts as a win or a loss.”

Steve was fine with that, so long as he got to see you again.

~2 weeks later~

Hawkins High was always bustling with activity, even in the early morning. Chatter from groups of students walking to school together

along with the hum of car motors filled the air. Everyone was either sitting on the steps of the school or leaning against their cars to show them off, trying to avoid going to first period as long as they could.

Suddenly, a low rumble sounded out in the air as an unfamiliar vehicle rounded the corner. It seemed like everyone in the school was watching as the sleek, black car pulled into the parking lot with the windows down, music blasting.

You enjoyed the feeling of the wind on your face as First Blood from AC/DC's new album sounded out through your car's stereo. You turned it down slightly only to talk to your brother.

"Got everything you need?" you asked Kyle.

"Everything but a doctor's note to get me out of here," your brother joked.

You chuckled as you grabbed your jean jacket from the trunk; You slung it over your Black Sabbath t shirt before killing the engine and locking the door.

You were about to start walking in until you were tackled into a hug from multiple children.

"(Y/n)!!" Dustin yelled, running towards you from the middle school next door.

"You're here!" Mike said, grinning wildly as he joined the group hug that Will and Lucas piled onto.

"Hey, guys," you smiled, "Good to know you avoided setting fire to this town without me."

"Hey what am I, chopped liver?" Kyle said.

The group quickly shifted their attention from you to your brother, each of them doing the secret handshakes they'd come up with together when they were little.

"I didn't know you guys were coming back," Will said, "Why hasn't anyone said anything?"

“Your mom wanted it to be a surprise,” you admitted, “I already talked to her.”

“Are you kidding me?!” Will exclaimed.

You noticed two girls you didn't recognize were standing somewhat awkwardly to the side, not really sure what was happening.

“New party members?” you asked, smiling at them.

“This is El and Max,” Mike said, introducing you, “El, Max, this is (Y/n) and Kyle. They used to live across the street from us.”

“Nice to meet you,” you said to them before turning back to the boys, “Damn, I'm gone for a couple years and you all go and get girlfriends?” you teased.

Mike and Lucas blushed and your smile widened.

“How do you know them again?” the redhead girl named Max questioned, “It's just. . . I don't know, you actually seem cool.”

You laughed at that, much to the boy's chagrin.

“I used to baby sit them when we were kids,” you explained.

“God knows why,” Lucas said, “It's not like you were any less trouble than us. You were only, like, thirteen.”

“Ok, but you were, like, seven and completely out of control,” you countered, mimicking his tone of voice.

“Woah, hold up, hold up,” Dustin said, circling around your Jaguar, “You have a fucking car?!”

“Hey, language, you little shit,” you said playfully, ruffling his hair, “And yes, I got it last year.”

“Sweet,” Dustin said, wide eyed as he continued to stare at your new ride.

“If you guys want I can drive you to the mall this weekend,” you

offered.

Excited shouts followed, effectively giving you your answer.

“Ok, but there's no way you'll all fit back there, so someone's riding in the trunk or I'm going to have to strap one of you to the roof,” you said, only half joking as you tossed your keys up, catching them with your other hand and pocketing them.

“I'll see you guys later. Hell awaits,” you said, gesturing to the school building. Kyle fell into step next to you as you walked up the stairs.

As you entered the halls of Hawkins High you couldn't help the sigh that escaped you. Sure, it was good to be back in some ways, but school was not one of them. You liked your school back in New York. It was so different from here. The people were more diverse, more open minded, and just less dickish overall.

One of the biggest downsides of a small town like Hawkins was that you were pretty much stuck with the same kids from kindergarten until high school, and you knew you'd have to see the same people that made your life hell in middle school for another year.

“Well shit, look who's back!”

Speak of the devil.

Your expression immediately hardened as Tommy and Carol walked up to you, looking just as pleased to see you as you were to see them. Among their posse were a couple of brainless football players and a guy you didn't recognize.

He had long, curly, dirty blond hair and blue eyes that took no shame in raking over your body. He had his hands in the pockets of his leather jacket as he chewed absentmindedly on a piece of gum.

“You just had to come and infect this school again, huh?” Tommy sneered.

“Nice to see you too,” you said sarcastically. Carol said nothing, just glaring at you behind her protective shield of a boyfriend. You resisted the urge to roll your eyes; you both knew she wouldn't do



shit.

“You know, I don’t think New York changed her at all, guys,” Tommy said, leaning into your face, “You still a bitch?”

You shot back without skipping a beat.

“I don’t know, Tommy. You still finger banging cheerleaders in the bathroom behind Carol’s back?”

The new guy let out a small chuckle at that while the rest of the group looked stunned.

“You what?!” Carol said, eyes wide as she shoved Tommy away from her.

“Carol, she’s lying!” Tommy panicked as she started walking away, “Babe, it’s not true, I swear!”

You sighed as you finally got them out of your hair, turning to your brother.

“You better get to your first class,” you said, “I’ll meet you at lunch, okay? And let me know if any assholes give you a hard time.”

“Will do,” he smiled, “See you.”

And with that he bounded up the stairs.

You started to make your way across the hall to get to your locker when you found your path blocked by a muscular chest, barely covered by a half-unbuttoned shirt.

You looked up to see the guy who was with Tommy just now and your breath caught in your throat as you tried to put some distance between you two. Everything about this guy screamed red flags, from the scent of his cologne to the slit in his eyebrow, but wow he was handsome. Then again he was friends with Tommy, so that placed him in the category of ‘shittiest humans ever’ by default.

“You’ve got a smart mouth on you, I like that,” he drawled, his voice smooth and deep. He hooked his thumb through one of his belt loops,

pulling his tight-fitting jeans down even lower. "I don't think I've seen you around here. The name's Billy Hargrove."

"Cool," you said before walking away. You were going to be late at this rate, and you knew he was nothing but trouble no matter how hot he was.

Billy was slightly taken aback at your disregard towards him, but he was persistent. He caught up with you easily, sliding into your view again as he walked backwards in your peripheral vision.

"So-"

"No thanks," you said, shutting him down fast.

Billy's face fell slightly as he kept up with your quickening pace.

"No thanks what?"

You stopped at your locker and started putting in your combination. He leaned against the wall as you did.

"I've heard about you, Hargrove, and I know your type. You're good looking, you know it, and everyone in this place seems to follow you around like a herd of sheep. You're gonna make some kind of lame pass, ask if I wanna take a ride in your mediocre car which is definitely a euphemism for something else, expect me to jump into your pants, and then never talk to me again afterwards. So to that I say: no thanks."

Under ordinary circumstances Billy would have been in uproar about you reading him or calling his car mediocre, but instead his lips twisted upwards into a shit-eating grin.

"So you think I'm good looking?"

You sighed as you slammed your locker shut. Of course that's all he got out of that.

"If I say yes will you go away?"

Billy laughed at that, still insistent on following you.

“Quite the opposite, sweetheart.”

“I’m not your sweetheart,” you glared.

“Would you like to be?”

You rolled your eyes. This guy just doesn't know when to quit.

“Do you pull these cheesy one liners out of your ass with every girl you see?” you asked, a wry smile tugging at your lips.

“Not every girl,” he said suggestively.

“Oh, really? Because I’ve only been here for half an hour and your hand’s slipped into the back pockets of at least five different willing participants,” you said.

“Jealous?” he smirked.

It was at this moment that you realized when you stopped walking he basically had you trapped between his body and the rows of lockers lining the walls. His gaze was hot and heavy as he loomed over you, purposefully giving you a full view down his shirt. A sudden spark of confidence made you smirk right back at him as you replied:

“You'd like that, wouldn't you?”

As the bell rang out into the hall you used it to get past Billy and continue on your way to your first period. He turned around, staring at your retreating figure.

“I never caught your name,” he said.

You stopped in your tracks to look at him over your shoulder.

“I never threw it,” you said, a playful tone to your voice, “(Y/n) (L/n). Don’t rack your brain too hard trying to remember it. If you’re a friend of Tommy’s we won’t be talking much.”

Your words were harsh, but the way you said them and the grin on your face made it sound like a challenge, and Billy Hargrove has never backed out of one of those.

## **2. .:Poor Sportsmanship:.**

Your first class was fairly uneventful. English with Mr. Strobert consisted of him lecturing about 17th century Italian literature and their religious influences, which was every bit as thrilling as it sounded.

When the bell finally rang everyone practically flew out of the room, the doorway packed with students trying to get out as fast as possible. You packed up your things and slung your backpack over your shoulder, making your way back out into the chaotic hallway.

As you were walking someone suddenly jumped onto your back and you yelped out in surprise. The laughter you heard as the weight lifted off your body was unmistakable.

“Kyle, I swear to god,” you seethed, shoving your brother away from you.

“Works every time,” he chuckled.

You shook your head, but you were unable to fight the smile on your face. He might be annoying as shit, but he was your brother and you loved him all the same. Despite how much you bickered you couldn't be closer.

“How was first period?” you asked.

“Boring,” he said, “But not all that bad. I met a cute girl~”

“Jeez, you don't waste any time, do you?” you scolded him.

“Hey, time's a tickin',” Kyle said with a grin, “Anyways, her name's Tina and she invited me to her party next weekend. You should come too!”

You didn't have to say anything, the unenthusiastic look on your face said it all.

“Oh come on, you said yourself you wanted to go out more,” Kyle countered, “Here's your chance!” his voice took a sly turn, “Besides,

you might meet someone there. What about that leather jacket guy from earlier? He seems like your type.”

That wasn't a compliment and you knew it.

“Fuck off,” you laughed, hitting him on the shoulder.

“I'm just saying, history repeats itself,” he said, “However, if you ever consider dating someone who isn't an asshole, Steve seems to have changed a lot.”

“Harrington?” you stared at your brother like he'd cracked, “We've never talked before that day at the mall. He didn't even know I existed when we went to school together.”

“Yeah, you were real torn up about it,” Kyle said casually.

“Shut it,” you said, your face flushing slightly, “I'm way past that. And besides, he's with Nancy.”

It was no secret to your brother that you had a huge crush on Steve Harrington in middle school, but he never even spared a glance your way. You got over him quickly, especially after Mike told you his sister was now dating Steve. You were in New York and weren't planning on coming back to Hawkins, so you figured you'd never have to see Steve again, but life had a funny way of changing your plans completely.

“Look, as much as I appreciate you trying to set me up with literally anyone you see, a night filled with shitty grain alcohol and horny teenagers has to be a hard pass for me,” you said.

“Suit yourself,” Kyle said, “But whether you like it or not you'll be there, because you're my ride.”

Before you could protest your brother was gone, expertly slipping away into the sea of other students.

“Son of a bitch,” you grumbled under your breath. To be fair you should've seen that one coming. You hadn't been to a party in a while, or at least a 'get so wasted you throw up in the yard' kind of party, which is exactly what this one sounded like. You did your best

to clean up your act in New York, and you didn't want to fall into your old bad habits again.

As you walked into the gym for P.E. you were greeted with the smug smile of Billy Hargrove.

'Speaking of bad habits,' you thought grimly.

Billy was the exact type of asshole you'd dated time and time again with the same outcome every time- a mistake you were determined to not make again. He sent a wink your way right on queue and you rolled your eyes so hard the gesture was almost audible.

You scanned the room, looking for a quiet corner to settle into until you spotted a head of hair too voluminous not to notice. You knew you shouldn't be surprised you had some of your classes with Steve, it's not like there were a lot of students in the senior class.

Against your better judgment, you walked over to where he was talking with one of the other guys on the basketball team.

"Ahoy," you smiled, stepping in front of him.

Steve looked up at you in surprise.

"Oh, hey," he smiled back.

Damn it, he was still cute.

"Mind if I join you guys?" you asked.

"Not at all," the guy next to him said flirtatiously, "Damn, Harrington, how'd you land a girl like this?"

Your faces flushed simultaneously and you hurriedly talked over each other.

"It's not like that-"

"She's not my-"

"I was just kidding," the guy chuckled, "I'm Johnny. It's nice to see a

new face around here.”

You relaxed slightly as you shook his hand, not bothering to explain you probably went to the same middle school too. You weren't exactly well known around school back then.

“Nice to meet you,” you said.

You hadn't really noticed before, but you didn't know a whole lot about Steve. Despite your playground crush on him, it was just superficial considering you'd never really talked, so you decided on the one thing you knew about him.

“How's Nancy?” you asked.

He seemed to stiffen up at your words, a little surprised.

“Oh, um, we're. . . we're not together anymore, if that's what you mean,” he said, scratching the back of his neck awkwardly.

Okay, well maybe you didn't know anything about him.

“Shit, sorry,” you said, “I didn't mean for- well, Mike told me last year. . .”

“It's okay,” Steve said with a weak smile, “You didn't know.”

Your gaze fell into your lap, feeling bad you'd brought it up since he clearly wasn't over it yet. The thought made your chest ache slightly. You groaned inwardly as you tried to snap yourself out of it. The last thing you needed was to fall for Steve fucking Harrington again. You had enough to worry about.

You were snapped out of your thoughts as Johnny tapped you on the shoulder to whisper in your ear.

“You know that means he's single, right?” he teased.

Your face went red and you shoved him away playfully. He laughed as you did, grinning back at you. Steve looked between the two of you slightly before the coach entered the gym and started yelling like he usually did.

"Alright, listen up!" the P.E. teacher boomed, "We're playing basketball today. Girls on the left court, boys on the right. Split into teams of five and we'll rotate. I want a nice clean game, okay? No funny business. Now get changed and get going!"

Everyone filed into the locker rooms to change, no one particularly eager to start the game other than the guys on the team. The coach threw out a couple basketballs and went to sit down on the benches, a newspaper in his hand.

"Real hands-on teaching, huh," you muttered under your breath.

"Tell me about it," Steve said, coming up to you, "He's a great coach, though. Believe it or not, I'm the best player on the team."

You smiled, shaking your head slightly. You could see a glimmer of the old Steve's confidence shine through his words.

"Is that so?"

A gruff voice interrupted your conversation as you both turned around to see Billy tossing the ball up and down in his hands.

"We've all seen how you play, Harrington," Billy said, "Saying you're the best player on the team isn't saying much."

His stupid minions laughed behind him while the basketball team glared daggers at them.

"Come on, Stevie," Billy goaded him on, "Let's see what you've got."

Steve grit his teeth. If there was one guy that never ceased to piss him off it was Billy Hargrove.

"You're on," he said.

Billy laughed dryly.

"You're gonna regret that, pretty boy," he said.

Steve's eyes narrowed as he pushed himself off the wall and set foot on the court, staring down the Californian as he did.



The second the game started you could tell this was not going to be the 'nice clean game' the coach said he wanted, not that he was even watching- too engulfed in the latest issue of the Hawkins Post.

Steve didn't waste any time, dodging past one of Billy's underlings as he made his way across the court. He found a clear shot, but before he could do anything Billy's shoulder slammed into his chest, knocking the air out of him. While he was off balance Steve's feet were swept out from under him and his back hit the ground hard.

Billy kicked up the ball with his foot and bolted towards the opposing basket, shoving another player to the side by the face as he scored a point. He shouted out in victory and his deadbeat friends, including Tommy, went up to congratulate him.

You gently nudged Johnny with your shoulder as you sat on one of the benches.

"I'm no pro player, but that looked like it was against the rules to me," you said.

"It is," Johnny said, his eyes narrowing, "It's always like this, though. I don't know why the hell Steve keeps taking the bait."

Steve groaned from the floor, his lungs burning. He staggered back up to his feet as Billy smiled dangerously, a wild look in his eyes.

"Gonna give up, Harrington?" he taunted, "Your reign is over."

"Do you ever shut up?" Steve huffed, charging at him.

Billy smirked as one of his friends passed him the ball. He caught it effortlessly before tossing it up in the air and spiking it like a volleyball at full force right into Steve's face. It hit him in the nose with a 'crack!' and you gasped as Steve fell to the floor, groaning in pain.

You shot up from the bench and ran over to him. You knelt on the floor beside him and tried to get a better look at the damage.

"Shit," you said under your breath. Steve Harrington had definitely seen better days. His nose was bleeding a lot, and his eyes were

glazed over as he looked around.

What irritated you the most was the fact that the game hadn't stopped. Billy and Tommy were still going at it against the basketball team, completely ignoring the fact that Steve was bleeding onto the floor.

You got up from Steve's side and marched over to where they were playing, aggravated as hell. Billy went to pass the ball to some other dickhead when you snatched the ball out of the air, making everyone's attention turn to you.

"Are you out of your mind?!" you shouted at Billy, taking him aback, "And you," you said turned to the P.E. Teacher, "Are you seeing this? How is this allowed?"

The coach put down his newspaper and looked at Steve in shock.

"Oh, Harrington, what happened?" he asked in confusion.

You scoffed and shook your head, throwing the basketball at Billy who caught it on reflex. For once, no snarky retort left his mouth. You managed to help Steve up off the floor and started to walk out of the gym.

"(L/n), where do you think you're going?" the coach yelled after you.

"The nurse's office," you yelled over your shoulder, not bothering to look back.

Billy said nothing, just staring at you- trying to figure you out.

"Guess Harrington needs his stupid bitch girlfriend to take care of him now, huh?" Tommy laughed, leaning on Billy's shoulder.

"Shut up," Billy said, shoving Tommy off of him before leaving the gym himself.

"And where are you going?" The coach shouted incredulously.

"Out for a smoke," Billy said, a cigarette already out between his fingers and irritated for some reason he couldn't place.

Meanwhile, you had helped Steve down the hallway to the nurse, sitting him down so she could stop the bleeding. It seemed like the worst of it was his nose, but there was a nasty bruise on his chest where Billy had crashed into him and on his shoulder where he had met the floor.

“Could you hold this for a moment, dear?” the nurse asked, handing you an ice pack.

“Of course,” you said, holding it up to Steve's face while the nurse went to get more antiseptic.

Steve groaned at the pressure and you let up on it slightly.

“Sorry,” you said, pressing down a bit lighter.

“It's okay,” he said quietly. His head was still spinning and the brightness of the lights made him want to vomit, but having you there was comforting for some reason.

He found himself staring at you subconsciously, taking in your features. Your eyes held so much concern for him as you dabbed at the blood on his face with a damp cloth. He didn't get it. You didn't even know him that well. He shouldn't have mattered to you at all, but you stood up for him- and now here you were in the nurse's office, seemingly caring more about him than his last girlfriend ever did.

“Thank you,” Steve said, cutting through the silence in the room.

You stopped wiping away the blood for a moment, your eyes meeting his.

“It's no problem,” you said, feeling your face heat up.

A smile crept onto your lips and Steve couldn't help but think about how it lit up your face.

The moment was ruined by the ringing of the last bell, both of you jumping back slightly when you realized how close you'd gotten.

“Um, well, I hope your nose heals up fast,” you said, grabbing your

bag.

“Yeah, thanks again,” Steve coughed out.

As you left the office he let out a frustrated sigh.

“Yeah, great answer, Steve,” he grumbled to himself, “Stupid. . .”

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“Ready to go?” you asked your brother.

“It's about time, let's head home,” he said, tossing his backpack behind him, “Where were you anyways? You're late.”

“I was in the nurse's office with Steve,” you said, immediately regretting that you'd told him.

Kyle smirked at you, and you had to fight the urge to punch him.

“Don't you start,” you warned him.

“I didn't say anything,” he said, his hands up in mock surrender.

As you were about to get in the car you heard someone arguing nearby, one of the voices all too familiar.

“I fucking told you last time, didn't I?” Billy seethed at his step sister.

“What happened to you being stuck taking care of me?” Max practically spat in his face.

“You're not gonna die,” he scoffed, “I told you, you're late again and you're skating home. You like that fucking piece of wood so much? Then use it!”

And with that, he slammed the door to his Camaro shut. He locked the doors before Max could get in, speeding away and leaving a cloud of dust in his wake.

“Asshole!” Max shouted after his car, flipping him off even though he

was already long gone.

You frowned as you watched the scene unfold.

“Still think he's my type?” you narrowed your eyes at your brother, walking up to Max.

“Unfortunately, yes,” your brother said once you were out of earshot, shaking his head.

“What a dick,” you said, making Max turn around in surprise, holding her skateboard behind her.

“Need a lift?” you offered.

And that's how you found yourself driving in the opposite direction of your house with a 12 year old you've just met in the backseat of your car.

“Just take this right and go all the way up Old Cherry Road,” Max said.

Silence consumed you as you took her directions, the passing houses gradually becoming farther apart from each other. After a moment Kyle spoke up, cutting through the tension.

“Does he always talk to you that way?” Kyle asked Max.

She was quiet, deep in thought as she looked out the window.

“Kind of,” she said, “He. . . wasn't always like that.”

You glanced at your brother and made the silent agreement to not push the subject any further.

Eventually you pulled up to a white and blue house on the street corner. Even from inside the car you could hear the heavy metal undoubtedly coming from Billy's room.

Max hopped out of the car, getting her skateboard from the trunk. She stopped at the door before closing it.

“Thanks for the ride,” she said.

“Any time,” you smiled, “I’ll see you this weekend for the mall. Lucas is excited to spend some time with you.”

She blushed, looking down as a small smile of her own graced her features. With a tiny wave she disappeared into the house.

You took a deep breath, about to pull away from the curb and go home when you heard the music suddenly stop. Instead you could hear a man's yelling voice replace the sound.

A male figure stepped into your view through one of the windows who you could only assume was their dad. You could see Billy backing up into his room and you could hear Max screaming something as their dad's shouting got progressively louder.

You quickly turned away, putting your car into drive. You already felt like you shouldn't have heard that, and you didn't want to pry into their personal lives any more than you already had.

As you drove away the sound of their dad yelling echoed in the back of your mind. Now that you thought about it, it wasn't really a surprise Billy acted the way he did if this is what he had to go home to every day. He was an asshole, there was no doubt about that, but maybe there was more to Billy Hargrove than what meets the eye.

### 3. .:An Eventful Evening:.

The rest of the week went by in a flash. You adjusted pretty quickly to your new school, and you were starting to make some new friends as well. After the whole basketball-to-the-face incident you found yourself talking to Steve more. He always made you laugh during your classes together and his friends were fun to hang out with too. You started eating lunch with their group and they welcomed you in like you'd been friends with them all your life.

However, there was someone else who slowly started to weasel his way into your daily life:

Billy Hargrove.

He'd let up on the flirting at least a little bit, but he still insisted on trying to talk to you. At first you were tempted to tell him exactly where he could shove it, but your mind drifted back to what you saw at his house. Of course his circumstances were no excuse for his behavior, but you gave him less shit than you normally would. He seemed to notice this, too, taking it as an opening to talk to you since you weren't shutting him down every five seconds.

It started off as him simply asking to borrow a pencil in class. You both knew he didn't need one, but you entertained him anyways. His usual flirty comments became something you got used to, and after a few days you actually found yourself looking forward to his stupid jokes in math class and the witty banter you two shared.

Turns out whenever he wasn't around his family or his shitty friends, the Keg King could actually be a decent person to hang out with. Still, you made sure to keep your distance. You knew if you let your guard down for a second you'd end up making the same bad decisions it always came to with guys like him.

Nonetheless, the week flew by, and by the time Saturday night came around you were ready to knock out in your bed the second you stepped foot in your house.

"Dad, we're home!" Kyle called up the stairs.

"Hey kids," your dad smiled, peeking his head out of the office before making his way down to the living room, "How was your day?"

"Pretty good," Kyle said.

"I'm going to sleep," you answered tiredly.

"Um, actually, (Y/n), we're going to Tina's to study for the Biology test, remember?" Kyle said.

'Shit,' you thought. You completely forgot about the party.

"A test after just the first week of school?" your dad questioned.

"Uh, yeah, accelerated courses and all that," Kyle said unconvincingly.

You wanted to slam your head into the door frame.

Your dad rose a suspicious brow and nodded slowly.

"Well, you better wait at least an hour after you finish 'studying' before you drive back," he called over his shoulder.

Kyle groaned, he knew he was busted.

"You know I don't mind you two having fun so long as you're safe," your dad said, "Just remember-"

"No speed, no crank, no heroin," you and Kyle spoke in tandem.

"That's right," your dad said proudly, walking back up the stairs, "Have fun, kids! Be home by 2:00. I'll be up working tonight, so I will know if you're out late."

"Alright, dad," you grinned. Once he disappeared back into his office you turned to your brother.

"Nice acting, Macchio," you rolled your eyes.

"Hey, it was worth a shot," Kyle said.

"Are you seriously making me stay for that stupid party?" you sighed,



already knowing the answer.

"I'm offended you'd think I'd let you off that easy," your brother smirked.

You groaned, flopping down on the couch.

"You seriously need to go out tonight," Kyle said, "you'll start growing mushrooms if you stay inside any longer."

You shot him a half-glare and sighed. Guess there really was no chance of a relaxing evening for you tonight.

You were able to at least sneak in a half hour nap before you had to make your way upstairs to get ready. Rubbing the sleep out of your eyes, you reached behind your record player to take out your Pyromania vinyl, Rock of Ages playing as you placed the needle down.

You brushed out your hair, teasing a few pieces on top to give yourself some volume and setting it with a few puffs of hairspray. You kept your t shirt on to be comfy but changed out of your jeans, opting for a black skirt instead. You used a ponytail to tie your shirt behind you, making it cinch in at the waist. At the last minute you decided to put on some burgundy lipstick; If you were going to be forced out of the house you were going to look damn good at the least.

As you bounded down the stairs you saw your brother already waiting by the door.

"Took you long enough," Kyle said playfully.

"Watch it," you said, "I can still drop your ass in the middle of the street and make you walk the rest of the way."

He laughed, opening the door for you as you got your keys out of your bag.

"I can't go too crazy tonight," you said as you got into the driver's seat, "I'm driving the kids to Starcourt tomorrow morning."

"You might have to carry me to the car then, because my plans for tomorrow exclusively include sleeping, so I'm going to get wasted," Kyle said.

You shook your head as you laughed, the engine of your car roaring to life. Kyle gave you the address to Tina's house and you drove off into the night.

You knew Kyle was looking forward to the party, probably more so to talk to this Tina girl, but you were still a little wary. It wasn't as if the place would be swarming with people who liked you. Tommy and Carol were bound to be there whether Tina invited them or not, and most of the people at Hawkins High who knew you in middle school didn't even remember your name. On the upside, it gave you a relatively clean slate to work with. You were pretty much known as the new girl with the cool car that hung out with Steve, and you were just fine with that.

You could hear the music from the party before Tina's house even came into view. When you finally pulled up to her driveway you could tell you were in for a night. Every floor of her house was filled with people, and you could hear yelling coming from her back yard. One couple had their tongues down each others throats under the tree in front of her house, the stragglers nearby too busy throwing up in the street to notice.

As you opened the door to the house you had to practically fight your way inside. There was hardly any space to walk, and it's not like the drunken people you were trying to get around were particularly aware of their surroundings.

When you and Kyle finally managed to get to the makeshift bar in the kitchen you took a moment to breathe, grateful to get your personal space back.

"Is this what you wanted?" you laughed.

"Absolutely," Kyle grinned as he mixed you a Jack and coke, "This is our chance to go crazy and be the stupid teenagers we were always meant to be. You got way too straight-laced in New York. It's time to be a little less responsible."

He handed you the drink he made and you accepted it, caving in.

"I'm supposed to be the responsible one," you said, taking a sip, "You know, to make sure you don't end up in jail."

He only shrugged, downing a shot of tequila. You looked around for a bit; it was relatively low energy for how many people there were.

"Hey, do you know where the music's coming from?" you asked Kyle.

"Boom box in the back," he said, "Why, not a fan?"

"Just want a change in atmosphere," you grinned, making your way through the hot, crowded room.

As you reached the deafening source of the party's music you shuffled through the box of cassette tapes next to it. You dug around for a while, reaching the very bottom before pulling out one with a label that made you smile.

You ejected the old tape, people yelling out as the music suddenly cut. You placed the one you found inside, pressing play and letting the intro riff of Motley Crue's Shout at the Devil ring out through the house.

The energy of the party was almost instantly cranked up to eleven, a group of drunk jocks starting to scream as they heard the song playing. You watched as they moved outside, competing to see who could hold the longest keg stand. Among them was Billy Hargrove, who you knew would be in attendance to defend his 'Keg King' title. His back was facing you as he braced himself against the keg, pushing himself into a hand stand while he drank from it. You rolled your eyes as the crowd around him went crazy, howling to the sky and pouring beers over their own heads.

As you shifted your attention elsewhere you saw your brother talking to Tina across the room and you smirked to yourself, walking over to grab another drink. You gave him a high five as you passed by and he gave you a thumbs up while Tina wasn't looking. You laughed as he did. Kyle was such a dork, but you still wished him the best. Tina really was a nice girl despite being surrounded by judgmental

assholes.

You took a moment to scan the kitchen table which held every brand of cheap alcohol a high school student could think to steal from their parent's liquor cabinet. You reached over to grab a bottle of fireball, pouring some into your solo cup. As you took a sip you felt a familiar burn in your throat, leaving a hot cinnamon flavor behind in your mouth. You topped yourself off before setting your sights on an empty spot on the couch, pushing through the crowd to sit down and hopefully go relatively unbothered.

“Hey, you're the new girl, right?”

So much for that.

You bit back a sigh as you turned in your seat to see who just sat down next to you. You recognized him from your P.E. class; he was one of the guys on Billy's team.

“Can I help you?” you stated rather than asked, trying to be polite as possible while shutting this guy down.

“You certainly can,” he said suggestively, “But don't worry, I'll be sure to help you out in return.”

You grimaced, taking a healthy swig of your drink. This might turn out to be a long night.

“Listen,” you snapped, “I'm really not in the mood to pretend to be civil right now, so this would be a lot easier if you just slinked back into whatever hole you crawled out of.”

The smirk on his face fell at your words.

“Come on, don't be difficult,” he said, placing a hand on your thigh.

“Hey, watch it,” you glared, moving to swat his hand away. He grabbed your wrist as you did, his hand moving slowly up your thigh. As he leaned into your face you were blasted with the smell of vodka on his breath.

“Let's have some fun, doll~”

You didn't let it go any further than that.

You took one last sip of your drink before throwing the rest of it into his face. He howled in pain, recoiling immediately as the liquor seeped into his eyes.

“You bitch!” he growled, staggering back blindly and trying desperately to find the bathroom.

You scoffed as he stumbled away, looking down at your now empty cup.

“What a waste,” you sighed to yourself.

You heard someone chuckle behind you and you spun around, ready to fend off any other creep who tried to come up to you.

“You're ruthless, sweetheart,” Billy grinned, “33% alcohol to the eyes has to bite. I was planning on being your knight in shining armor, but I guess you had it covered.”

The tension in your shoulders left when you saw who it was, but only slightly. This was still Billy, there was no doubt he'd try something. You were about to make a sarcastic retort when the words got caught in your throat.

You hadn't been able to tell during his keg stand with his back facing you, but underneath that leather jacket of his, there was no shirt to be found. Even in the dim lighting you could see how defined his muscles were. His chest looked like it was sculpted out of stone, his tan skin glistening with a thin sheen of sweat.

Billy smirked devilishly as he caught you staring, taking the seat next to you and slinging an arm around the back of the couch, not quite touching your shoulders.

“See something you like?” he cooed.

You didn't know what came over you, but in that instant a coy smile crept onto your painted lips as you gave him a once over.

“Definitely.”

That caught Billy off guard more than he wanted to admit or let show. This wasn't too far off from the back and forth game you two usually played, but your banter usually consisted of him flirting with you and you teasing him or finding new creative ways to tell him to fuck off. You've never said anything back that even implied reciprocation on your part, so for you to say something like that so outright was a bit of a shock. Never the less he recovered quickly, his usual smirk settling on his face.

“Finally confessing your love?” he joked.

“No,” you said, “This whiskey's just getting to me.”

A genuine laugh escaped him as you said that, the sound making your heart flutter. He was so close you could feel his hot breath fan across your skin. He dragged his tongue across his lips, an action your eyes followed. If you just leaned forward a few inches you'd be kissing him right now.

Your eyes widened as the thought went through your mind, immediately shoving it away.

'No. No no no, what the hell, (Y/n)?' you thought frantically, 'You promised yourself you wouldn't get involved with this guy.'

You cursed your heart for beating so fast, almost certain he could hear it pound against your chest. However, you were both snapped out of the moment when you heard someone call out your name.

“Hey, (Y/n)!”

Your head snapped up, meeting Steve's eyes. He smiled as you did and waved you over. You turned to Billy, feeling mixed emotions.

“Sorry, I should probably, uh. . .” you gestured over to Steve and his friends before getting your bag from the side of the couch.

“Yeah,” Billy said, biting his lip slightly, “Go ahead.”

You got up from the couch, stopping before you left.

“See you around, Billy,” you said, giving him a small smile.

His heart sped up at your words. It was the first time you'd called him that. Not a sarcastic nickname, not Hargrove, just Billy.

Billy watched as you walked over to Steve, laughing and giving him a hug. He felt a strange pressure in his chest and his gut twisted into an ugly knot as Steve slung a casual arm around your shoulders.

He scoffed, downing the rest of his drink and tossing the plastic cup to the side. This wasn't like him at all. He was Billy Hargrove- the Keg King and the school's most infamous playboy. He could get any girl he wanted, except for you, it seemed.

Why did seeing you with Steve piss him off so much? As soon as the word 'jealousy' crossed his mind he grit his teeth hard. No. There was no way he was jealous. You weren't his, and even if you were you wouldn't be for long. He had two rules: don't get attached and never fuck the same girl twice. He had a plan as soon as he set foot in this shit hole town: Tough out his last year of school, bang as many chicks as possible, and high tail it back to California as soon as he graduated. Committed relationships were never Billy's forte, and he didn't plan on changing that any time soon.

At least, that's what he told himself.

Billy got up from the couch, eyes scanning the party like a predator choosing his prey as he looked for some other girl to take his mind off you.

Steve's eyes narrowed as he watched Billy stalk off and pulled you in closer to him, whispering in your ear.

“Are you okay?” he asked quietly.

“Huh? Yeah, I'm fine,” You said. Your cheeks heated up at your proximity, but you were more confused by his question than anything.

“Was Billy bothering you?” Steve asked, more serious than you'd ever seen him before. Your eyes went wide and you shook your head.

“No, we were just talking,” you said, “He wouldn't actually pull anything like the last deadbeat I was talking to. . . Why?”

Steve had a far away look in his eyes as he tried to come up with an answer. What was he supposed to say? 'Oh, well last year that guy smashed a plate over my head, threatened to kill your friend, and had to be taken out with a tranquilizer.'

"Just. . . be careful," Steve decided on saying, "He isn't a great person."

You heard the cheering crowd behind you get substantially louder, and you both turned around to see what all the commotion was about, which you regretted pretty fast.

Billy was in the middle of the room, making out with some busty brunette as she gave him a lap dance. He seemed to be enjoying himself a little too much, running his hands through her hair and down body. After a little while the girl whispered something in his ear that made him smirk, take her hand, and start leading her upstairs. It was clear they weren't going to be reading the bible up there.

"Yeah," you said to Steve, tearing your eyes away from their retreating figures, "I've noticed."

Steve pulled his focus from Billy to you. He'd never admit it, but part of him was glad Billy just pulled that little stunt in front of you. He could tell you were disappointed, but he couldn't understand what you saw in Billy.

After Nancy, Steve didn't know if he'd be able to trust people when it came to relationships. His heart was broken in a single, drunken confession. But you seemed so different from the other girls. Not really in an outward way, but you weren't afraid to be yourself. You had an energy and confidence that drew people to you, even if you didn't think so.

At first he just thought you'd be another girl who'd reject him right away at Scoops- another tally in the 'You Suck' column. But you'd stuck around and made an actual effort to be friends with him, and not just to get popular but because you actually wanted to get to know him. That in itself was pretty rare for Steve.



The fact that he could have known you all this time ate away at him, and he felt more than guilty that he hadn't bothered to talk to you when you were in middle school. Maybe it was the alcohol coursing through his system, but a tiny part of him wanted your friendship to grow into something more.

The only thing that could get in his way was Hawkins' resident asshole Billy Hargrove, and get in his way he certainly did.

#### 4. .:A Date?:.

Sunlight streamed in through your window, ribbons of light cascading across your bed sheets. You could hear the faint sound of birds chirping as the morning greeted you.

And you felt like complete and utter shit.

You groaned, your head pounding, as you tried to block out some of the light with your pillow. You'd gotten home last night at 2:00 on the dot, feeling fine. In fact, you even caught up on some homework before you went to sleep. Now you just felt like you'd been hit by a truck.

You looked over at the time, reluctantly getting out of bed when you saw how late in the morning it was. The kids were biking over in half an hour to go to the mall and you looked like hell.

You padded down the hallway, mustering up a weak laugh when you saw your brother passed out in his room, knowing he'd probably wake up to the same fate as you.

As you made your way downstairs the smell of breakfast food made your stomach rumble on instinct. You were 'hydrated' plenty last night, but there wasn't much actual food. Your eyes lit up as you rounded the corner and saw your dad plating up some eggs, bacon, and pancakes. He grinned as he saw you, setting the plate down on the table in front of you.

"And how is my daughter doing this fine morning?" he asked, already knowing the answer.

"Swell," you said sarcastically.

He laughed, walking over to the cabinet to get you some Tylenol and a glass of water.

"Trust me, I know the feeling," he said, "I can't really say anything on this one, I'd be lying if I said I haven't done worse when I was your age. That hangover is punishment enough. Just drink water

throughout the day, and go on and eat something greasy while you're at the mall too. But get your blood sugar up right now, I don't want you back in that car until your head's clear, you understand?"

"Will do," you said, already stuffing your face, "Thanks, dad."

"You're welcome," he smiled, "Love you, drive safe."

"Love you too," you said through a mouthful of bacon.

As he retreated back into his office you savored the taste of the feast he made for you. You smiled fondly as you did. Your dad didn't really cook until he became a single parent. When he took on the full responsibility of raising you and your brother, he tried his best to fill your mom's role, following the old recipe books she'd left behind. His first attempts were a general health hazard, but as time went on he actually turned out to be a great cook.

The sudden ringing of bicycle bells outside your house made you scarf down the rest of your plate, snatching your car keys off the table.

You opened the front door to see the whole gang waiting for you.

"I swear, the only time you guys are on time for anything is when you're leeching off of me," you said, unlocking the car and leaving them to figure out the seating.

"You know us so well," Dustin said, hopping into the shotgun seat before anyone else could take it.

"I forgot to ask earlier, but how was that summer camp you went to, Dustin?" you asked, turning on the engine.

"It was so cool," he beamed, "Our counselor taught us how to make all kinds of inventions. I made a self-nailing hammer, a wind powered clock, and a radio tower so I can talk to my girlfriend whenever I want since her parents monitor her phone calls."

"Girlfriend?" you turned to look at him. He smiled back at you, bright as anything.

“Yeah, we were surprised too,” Max said from the back.

“Although we're not sure she actually exists,” Mike chimed in, “Apparently she's as hot as Phoebe Cates.”

“Hotter than Phoebe Cates,” Dustin corrected, “And she's a genius too.”

“Riiight,” Lucas said.

“Well I think she sounds great, Dusty,” you said, “It's pretty romantic you built that radio tower just to talk to her.”

“It's the strongest communications network in Hawkins across 150 channels,” he said proudly.

“Well, that's certainly impressive,” you grinned, ruffling his hair.

Soon you pulled up to one of the many entrances to the mall, stopping at the curb.

“Well, this is your stop, guys,” you said, “What are you gonna see?”

“The Stuff,” Mike said excitedly.

“Isn't that rated R?” you questioned, a brow raised.

All of them looked at each other, slightly panicked.

“Well, we'll see you later, (Y/n)!” Lucas said, flinging open the back door and getting out as fast as he could. Everyone else quickly fled after him, running towards the theater. You shook your head. They got themselves into a lot of shenanigans, but admittedly you were the one instigating it most of the time when you were younger, even if you were the babysitter.

However, as soon as the kids left for the movie you were painfully reminded of the throbbing headache you had. You groaned as one of the strobe lights around the movie theater glared in your face, not helping matters in the slightest.

You knew eating a bunch of greasy food technically didn't do

anything for a hangover, but it sure made you feel a hell of a lot better emotionally. With that in mind you decided to walk over to the Burger Chef located inside the mall for a little pick me up.

Luckily for you there wasn't much of a line. Only a few people were scattered around the seating area at the food court. You were looking over the menu hanging on the wall when a familiar voice broke your train of thought.

“(Y/n)?”

You looked around at the sound of your name to see Steve looking back at you, just as surprised.

“Hey,” you said. You took a moment to look over him. He looked just as awful as you did, if you were honest. The deep-set bags under his tired eyes aged him an eternity, and he looked a bit green as well.

“You too, huh?” You bit back a grin as you gave him a short laugh through your nose.

“Yeah,” he admitted, “In hind sight I probably shouldn't have mixed liquors, but hey, there's nothing I can do about it now. Figured some fries might help.”

“They always do,” you said, “What are you doing here, anyways? Aren't you on your shift at Scoops?” You noticed he was still in his work uniform.

“Lunch break,” he explained, “I don't really have long, but we can grab a table if you want.”

“I'd like that,” you smiled.

Steve was a little surprised at his own forwardness. Apparently he was hungover enough to not overthink everything that came out of his mouth. However he was even even more surprised at you agreeing to sit down with him. He didn't know why his brain was making such a big deal out of this; you ate lunch with him every day and hung out together all the time, but then again that was also including a group of other people. You and Steve had never really spent time together when it was just the two of you, except for when

you iced his busted face after the basketball stunt, which hardly counted as a first date.

He felt uncharacteristically nervous as he slid into the booth next to you. A year ago he would have been pulling out all the stops to make you his, but now he just wasn't so sure anymore. He was never afraid of rejection before, but when he thought of you as the one rejecting him he figured it would be better to not say anything at all.

'Get yourself together,' Steve thought to himself, 'It's just lunch with a friend. Friends do that!'

"Penny for your thoughts, Popeye?" you said, flicking the fabric of his sailor hat.

"Huh?" Steve said, snapping out of it, "Oh, nothing, just, uh. . ." he quickly picked up a menu, hoping to cover the majority of his reddening face with it, "Looking at the XXL Supreme. 2Lb beef patty with bbq sauce, ranch, fried pickles, beer cheese and. . . yeah, that sounds pretty gross."

"I'll probably stick to a regular burger," you laughed, glancing at the menu over his shoulder.

You were so close he could feel the heat coming off your body and smell the sweet scent of your perfume. He scolded himself for being so weak, forcing himself to concentrate only on the food.

Right at that moment a waiter strolled up to you, writing pad in hand.

"Hi. Welcome to Burger Chef," he said, sounding just as dead inside as he looked, "How may I serve you today?"

"A double patty melt with cheddar," Steve said, "And a coke, please."

"I'm trying to decide between-" you stopped yourself as you looked up, staring at the waiter. You thought he looked familiar and it was then that you realized he was one of the guys that bullied your brother in middle school. Your eyes narrowed as you recalled how he and his friends cut the strings on Kyle's guitar when he brought it to school one day.

You saw a flash of recognition in his eyes and your lips curved upwards.

“The classic burger, simple,” you said, the fakest smile you could muster on your face, “But on a sesame bun instead of the brioche, no mayo, extra mustard, add caramelized onions and extra cheese, and don't forget the pickles. If you could add shredded lettuce instead of the whole leaf that'd be great. Oh, and a Neapolitan shake with chocolate syrup and no whipped cream.”

“We don't have a Neapolitan shake,” he said irritably and slightly panicked, trying to write everything down.

“Well I heard in your commercial if you just ask, an employee would be happy to mix any of the milkshake flavors together,” you said, your smirk widening. What could you say? Being a bitch was fun sometimes- especially when the person on the receiving end was a total dickhead.

“Coming right up,” the waiter said through his teeth.

Steve looked between the two of you before the waiter stormed off to the kitchen window, slamming his hand down on the bell with more force than necessary.

“So, what'd he do?” Steve chuckled.

“Bullied my brother really bad in school,” you said, “What goes around comes around, though. In a few years Kyle will be off to LA to start touring with his band and this guy will still be here covered in fry grease wearing a burger shaped hat.”

“Well I hope that's not my fate,” Steve said, only half joking as he took his uniform hat off, twirling it in his hands.

You could tell even though he tried to hide behind the humor it was something he really was concerned about.

“Hey, don't worry about it,” you said, nudging his shoulder lightly, “You're not an asshole. . . anymore.”

You managed to get a laugh out of him at the end and you smiled,

glad you were at least able to cheer him up some.

“Seriously, though, it's fine to not know what you want to do with your life yet,” you said, “Hell, I know grown ass men who still don't know what they're doing. You don't have to go to some fancy college to do something great.”

Steve looked at you, thinking over your words. He thought it was crazy how you were his age but you were so much more mature and optimistic than he was. The way you thought was unlike anyone he's met before in Hawkins, and it only further intensified his wanting to get to know you.

“Thanks, (Y/n),” he smiled.

Meanwhile, your little crew of gremlins had finished their film, now making their way to the food court for lunch.

“What do you think The Stuff tastes like?” Lucas asked to no one in particular.

“I bet it's like Betty Crocker frosting,” Dustin said dreamily.

“Um can we not talk about how sentient parasitic goo tastes? Because we're literally about to go eat,” Max said.

Suddenly Dustin stopped in his tracks, making Will run into his back.

“Dustin, what the hell?” Mike said, screeching to a halt before he could collide with Will.

“No way,” Dustin said, staring far off some place the others couldn't see.

“What's wrong?” El asked, confused.

Dustin pulled his friends behind the shrubbery next to the fountain, ducking in the cover as he peeked his head out slightly.

“They're on a date!” Dustin said, a little too loudly. He ignored the stares he got from passersby as he continued to watch you and Steve laugh over your burgers in your shared booth.



“(Y/n) and Steve?” Mike said, “I thought he was still hung up over Nancy breaking up with him.”

“Well clearly the man's moved on,” Lucas said.

Max rolled her eyes, hitting him on the arm.

“Ow!” Lucas exclaimed, turning to her, “What was that for?”

“Just because a guy and a girl are hanging out doesn't mean it's a 'date',” she pointed out, “Maybe they're just good friends. I've seen them around each other a lot at school.”

“I think he finally worked up the courage to ask her out for real,” Dustin started theorizing, ignoring Max completely.

“What do you mean for real?” Will asked.

“It's so obvious he's into her but he's scared of striking out,” Dustin said, “That whole Nancy situation really struck a blow to his self confidence.”

Mike tried to get a better look at what you two were doing, leaning over El's shoulder and squinting at the burger place. Suddenly his footing slipped from under him as he accidentally took a step on the wet tile near the fountain and fell on his ass into a bush.

“Shit!”

You and Steve stopped eating your burgers and turned around at the sudden noise, but saw nothing but a ruffle in the plants nearby.

“That was weird,” you said, looking around.

“Yeah,” Steve said, “Well, it's bear season, you never know when they'll sneak up on you.”

You laughed at that, the sound making Steve's heart flutter. He loved your laugh, even more so when he knew he was the cause of it.

Suddenly Steve remembered his shift was probably starting, his lunch break was less than an hour long.

“Shit, I should've been back ten minutes ago,” Steve said, looking down at his watch, “My shift already started.”

“Oh, sorry,” you said, “I didn't mean for this to go on for so long.”

Steve looked surprised, shaking his head vigorously.

“No, no, I liked it,” he said, not fully registering how the sentence sounded out loud until your cheeks flushed.

“I-I mean-”

“I get it,” you laughed softly, “I liked it too.”

Steve felt like his heart was just shot through with cupid's arrow as you smiled up at him and offered to walk him back to Scoops. He hadn't felt this way since Nancy. After she broke his heart he was convinced he would never get over her, but now you were here, occupying all the free space in his mind despite only knowing you for a short while. What the hell was going on with him?

His mental debate came to an unceremonious stop when he realized you were already in front of the ice cream shop.

Steve turned to you and did his best to sound indifferent. He had a really good time, but he didn't know if you felt the same way.

“Well, I better get back to it,” he said, clearing his throat awkwardly, “You know, suit up, sling ice cream, appease the masses-”

“We should do this again sometime,” you said, effectively flipping the 'off' switch on his rambling.

Steve seemed to freeze in this plane of existence, staring at you with wide eyes.

“Yeah! I mean, that's what I was gonna ask you, but I didn't know if you wanted to, and. . .” he trailed off, kicking himself again.

'When you talk you just make it worse,' he mentally scolded himself.

You laughed a bit at his flushed face.

'Adorable,' you thought. For being the former king of Hawkins High, he was still a giant dork.

"Well I'll definitely see you around this time, then," you smiled, reminded of your first day back. Things were different between you two now, but that wasn't a bad thing at all.

You walked out of Scoops Ahoy feeling lighter, a smile on your face and your headache long forgotten. With your disastrous dating history, maybe Steve Harrington was the kind of guy who could be good for you right now.

The very thought made you feel giddy inside, but as you said yourself before, life had a funny way of changing your plans completely.

## 5. .:Not According to Plan:.

The next day you found yourselves outside the Hawkins community pool after the kids, aside from Max, begged you to drive them there.

"You're lucky I'm taking you anywhere after you spied on me," you said, hands on your hips.

"I wouldn't exactly call it 'spying'," Lucas said.

"You were staring at us from the bushes," you deadpanned.

"Fair enough," Dustin said.

"Listen, I don't know what you guys thought that was, but Steve and I were just hanging out and I don't want to hear you guys spreading rumors around, okay?" you sighed.

"Sorry, (Y/n)," Will said.

"It's alright," you said, "Just don't go sneaking around in the fake plants at the mall again, someone might call Hopper."

Everyone got their swimsuits from the trunk and ran to the changing rooms, eager to jump in the pool and cool off a bit.

You locked up your car, tying your swimsuit cover around your waist. You were lucky this place had life guards, at least; you wouldn't have to keep track of everyone all the time. As you looked up to the guard seat, however, you began to think maybe you weren't so lucky.

"You've got to be kidding me," you said to yourself. Now you understood why Max was less than enthusiastic to come here.

"Of course you would work here," you said, walking up to Billy.

"Just couldn't get enough of me, hm?" He grinned, stepping down from his perch.

"Don't flatter yourself, hotshot," you said, elbowing him in the ribs.

The razor sharp glares you were receiving from the middle aged women around you were kind of hard to ignore. Moms everywhere were wishing you would drown as Billy's attention shifted solely to you.

"I see you're popular with the PTSA," you said, leaning back against the ladder.

"You could say that," Billy chuckled, "I don't mind. Boss gives me extra shifts because I bring in more customers."

"I wonder why," you said, rolling your eyes, "Have you ever considered putting on a shirt?"

"People seem to like me better without one," Billy said, eyeing you.

Your throat suddenly felt dry as his eyes traveled down your body, leaving shivers in their wake. You bit your lip, trying to clear your mind, an action that Billy's eyes followed. You took a small step back, and the energy seemed to disperse.

'Don't fucking do this,' you thought to yourself, 'You know how he is, you're just gonna get your heart broken again.'

Billy seemed to sense the shift in the air too, clearing his throat a bit.

"Where's your boyfriend?" he asked as a joke, but you could have sworn his tone turned a little bitter despite the unwavering kilowatt smile on his face.

"Boyfriend?" your eyebrows shot up as you looked at him.

"King Steve," he said, making air quotations with his hands.

You felt a hot blush creep onto your cheeks, hoping you could pass it off and blame it on the sun.

"He's not my boyfriend," you said.

Billy scoffed at that.

"Come on, with the way he looks at you? I bet he wishes he was."

“And you don’t?” you smirked.

Billy looked at you, surprised, before chuckling and letting out a low whistle.

“Bold today, aren’t we?” he said, leaning against the life guard post and giving you a full view of his chiseled chest, “I must be rubbing off on you.”

“Yeah, well you’re a terrible influence,” You laughed.

While you and Billy talked Max looked over to you guys, watching. A small crease formed in her brow as she saw Billy smile at you, his laugh ringing out through the pool. How long had it been since she saw him smile? Really smile. She couldn't recall any time in the last few years. Maybe in California when they were younger? As Max watched you she couldn't help but think this was the calmest she'd seen her stepbrother in a long, long time.

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As soon as you got home you shrugged off your jacket and jumped onto your bed, sighing as you sank into the plush mattress. It had been an exhausting day making sure the kids didn't get themselves killed. After the pool you drove them to get something to eat, the group just as loud and rowdy as usual. You were lucky the restaurant owner didn't kick you out.

You reached over the mattress, flipping through the vinyls next to your bed. You smiled as you looked over your collection- Prince, Guns N' Roses, Bowie, Van Halen, Bon Jovi, Def Leppard, and anything else you could think of. You grinned as you picked one out, setting it carefully down on your record player. You leaned back as Ride the Lightning started playing, closing your eyes to focus on the guitar riffs.

Music was your happy place, pretty much everyone who knew you knew that. Every year for your birthday you'd get a new record from your brother, and some of your favorite memories from when you were younger were at the concerts your dad took you too. Music was always something that got you through tough times.

You were pulled out of your thoughts fairly abruptly as you heard pounding against your window. You pulled the needle off your record player as you turned to face the wall, covered mostly by your curtains. At first you thought it was just the nearby branches scraping against the glass, but fear crept up your spine as your window began to slowly slide open, the night breeze coming into your room. You wanted to scream, and you knew you should, but no sound came out of your mouth. Your only instinct was to reach for the switch blade in your bedside drawer, your hands shaking.

In the darkness a figure emerged from the window frame, one leg coming into your room followed by the other, and you froze as it revealed itself as. . .

“Are you fucking kidding me?!”

Billy jumped at your sudden outburst, covering his ears.

“You scared the shit out of me,” his eyes widened as he saw the knife in your hand, “Hey, put that down, would you?”

“I scared the shit out of you?” you said incredulously, “You're the one who just broke into my house!”

“Hey, quiet down, aren't your parents sleeping?”

You turned to him with a look that could cut glass.

“First of all, this is my house, Hargrove, so don't tell me to quiet down. Second, my dad's working late tonight and my brother can sleep through Armageddon like a log, so don't you worry about it.”

Billy just stared at you, not saying anything.

“What?” you seethed, practically feeling your blood vessels about to pop.

“Nothing, you're just hot when you're mad.”

“I can't fucking believe this,” you groaned. He laughed at your reaction. You closed your bedroom door with a huff and turned to Billy, less than impressed.

“How the hell did you even find my house?” you asked irritably.

“You can hear the music from the other side of town,” he said with a smirk, “There's not a lot of other people who listen to Metallica around here, you know.”

“And you just assumed it was me?” you scoffed, “Seriously, this house could've belonged to some middle aged dad with a gun for all you knew.”

“Well then this conversation would be very different,” he chuckled, making himself at home and sitting on your bed.

You huffed at his antics, taking a seat at your vanity chair.

“Nice room,” he said, looking around.

“Thanks,” you said, still weirded out at this whole situation. You were alone in your room with Billy Hargrove- This was a recipe for a world of relapsing bad choices. As he admired your room you couldn't help but notice how normal he acted after literally breaking and entering. You couldn't even imagine the number of window locks he'd picked for a quick hook up, and you swallowed hard as you mentally prepared yourself to kick his ass out the second floor where he came from if he tried anything.

Billy's eyes scanned over the posters on your wall, most of them were musicians or your favorite horror movies. There was also a bulletin board by your desk plastered with tickets from various concerts. He rose a brow as he spotted something in the corner of your room.

“You play?” he asked, walking over to your electric guitar.

“Yeah,” you said, “I'm not as good as my brother, he's in an actual band and shit, but my mom taught me.”

You reclaimed your seat on your own bed as he slipped the strap over his head and started playing softly. Without the amp hooked up you could just barely hear the notes as his fingers moved across the fret board.

'Damn it, (Y/n), don't think about how hot he looks playing that,' you



said to yourself.

As he played Billy noticed a few marks on the body of the guitar and he turned it on its side to get a better look. His eyes widened as he saw it was an autograph. The writing was scrawled out in a mess of stylized letters, but the name was unmistakable.

“Mick Mars?” he said, sitting back on your bed and turning to you, “How the hell did you get him to sign this?”

“My dad grew up in LA,” you said, “Mars was with the guys opening for my dad's band at the time. When Crue made it big they met up when they were touring in New York and my dad had him sign his guitar. He kept it all this time and gave it to me when I turned sixteen.”

“That's fucking awesome,” Billy said, an excited twinkle in his eyes, “I got to see the first show they ever did at the Starwood.”

“No way,” you said, “They let you in?”

“Nope,” he grinned, “A friend sneaked me inside. It was fucking crazy. Tommy's kit practically fell apart before they even started and before I knew it there was an all out fist fight. Sixx jumped off the stage and slammed his bass into this guy's neck and security had to break it up. But they kicked ass once they got started. I remember when I was leaving the bouncer caught me because I was clearly under eighteen and he chased me down the street.”

“That is crazy,” you laughed, him joining you. Silence took over you two momentarily, but it was a comfortable silence. You looked over to him, your fingers playing with the hem of your shirt as you spoke.

“Do you miss it?” you asked quietly.

“What?” he asked.

“California,” you said, “I've only ever been once when we took a road trip to Disneyland, but I know that's not all there is to it. What was it like?”

You sort of regretted asking when you saw the far off look in his eyes,

but it disappeared as soon as it came.

“Better than this shit hole,” he said, “I miss the beach, I guess.”

“Do you surf or something?” you asked.

“Yeah,” he said, kind of surprised, “How'd you know?”

“The hair,” you joked.

He scoffed, but the smile on his face defied his action of trying to shove you off the bed.

“Hey, this is my property,” you said, swatting his arms away, “If anyone's getting thrown off it's you.”

As much as you didn't want to admit it, you were actually enjoying the company of Hawkin's biggest asshole.

As your mock wrestling match died down the room slowly began to fill with the same energy you had felt at the pool, and from the way Billy was looking at you he could feel it too. You couldn't believe he hadn't tried anything yet; he had you alone in your bedroom and your dad wasn't home. You figured he'd make a pass at you right away, but his actions so far really did seem like he just wanted to talk to you tonight.

You pretended not to be disappointed that he hadn't, and you also pretended not to notice the way his eyes drifted down to your lips. You were a mere few centimeters away from each other now, some invisible force pulling you closer together.

To your surprise it was Billy who pulled away, clearing his throat.

“Listen, I should bounce,” he said, getting up from your bed and leaving you shocked, “I'll bother you more tomorrow at school, yeah?”

You stared at his back as he went to open the window again, your head spinning. As loud as the voice of caution in your head was, there was something about this situation and this stupid asshole in front of you that made you say 'fuck it.'

Before he got his legs through the window frame you turned him around by his shoulders and pulled him into a heated kiss. It was as if all the tension between you two that had been building since you first spoke had just been acknowledged, and damn if it didn't feel good.

As you pulled away, the possibility of that whole exit act being a ploy to get you to make the first move crossed your mind, but the Californian was visibly surprised.

For the first time in his life Billy Hargrove was speechless.

Well, almost.

"I thought you said 'no thanks,'" he chuckled breathlessly.

"Shut the hell up before I change my mind," you said, pulling him back in for another kiss by the collar of his leather jacket.

Things heated up quickly, but it always seemed like that when it came to Billy Hargrove. He shrugged his jacket off with ease, not breaking your kiss. You bit his lower lip slightly and he let out a low growl, his fingers pulling you forward by your belt. Your arms snaked around his neck as you deepened the kiss, and his hands wandered down to your waist.

You started unbuttoning the remaining half of his shirt and he seemed hesitant for a moment before sliding it off his shoulders.

Maybe you wouldn't notice.

You froze as his chest was fully exposed to you. Even in the dark you could see the angry bruises that littered his torso. He winced as you ran your hand over them gently, and you pulled your hand away.

"Billy-

"It's fine," he said quickly.

"It's clearly not fine," you countered.

"Well it's none of your business," he said, his voice wavering.

There was no real threat behind his words, if anything it sounded like a cry for help, and your chest tightened. A thought crossed your mind just then: why was Billy out of the house on the wrong side of town in the first place? There were no parties happening tonight, and it wasn't as if there were clubs in Hawkins. He left his house for a reason.

"Did your dad do this?" you asked quietly.

His head snapped up to look at you, and for a moment you were scared of what you saw in his eyes.

"I'm sorry," you said, "When I dropped Max off that one day I heard him yelling and. . . I don't know, I shouldn't have-"

You were cut off sharply by Billy's lips crashing into yours, his actions hungry and more forceful than before. He pulled back just enough to look into your eyes, his hot breath fanning across your neck.

"You fucking tell anyone about this-"

"I won't," you said, chest heaving, your hands gripping onto his bare shoulders, "I wouldn't do that to you." Your heart was pounding out of your chest as you chose your next words carefully. You didn't realize until now just how broken he was.

"It's gonna be okay."

He swallowed hard at your words, gritting his teeth. You tried to steady your shaking hands as you cupped his cheeks, kissing him softly. He kissed you back like a man starved. His grip on you was like a vice, as if he was afraid you would disappear at any moment. His hands weaved through your hair as you moved to straddle his hips, pressing your foreheads together.

"God, you're fucking killing me," he groaned.

Your breath caught in the back of your throat as his lips latched onto your neck, feeling heat start to pool in your stomach.

"Are you sure about this?" he asked.

“Don't pretend to be a gentleman all of a sudden, Hargrove,” you smirked.

Just before you could pull him back in, you heard the sound of your front door closing and you both froze.

“Shit,” you said in unison.

You scrambled off him hurriedly, hearing the stairs creak as the footsteps got louder. Billy didn't bother with his shirt, slinging his jacket on before practically diving out the window and pressing his body against the outside wall so he couldn't be seen.

You rushed under the covers just as your door creaked open.

“You still awake in here?” your dad asked.

“Well now I am,” you groaned, pretending to rub the sleep from your eyes.

“Sorry, kiddo,” your dad laughed, “Just making sure you didn't die.”

“Goodnight, dad,” you said, smiling as you rolled your eyes.

“Goodnight,” he smiled back, shutting the door gently.

When you heard the door to his office shut you heaved an audible sigh of relief.

“That was fucking close,” Billy said, poking his head in through the window.

“I know,” you said.

“Well, that's one way to kill the mood,” he sighed, running a hand through his hair.

“Sorry,” you said, “He's not going to sleep for a good few hours, so. .  
.”

His hand lifted your chin up and you saw that stupid shit eating grin of his plastered onto his face.

“Don't worry, I'm sure we can pick up where we left off real soon,” he said, planting one more kiss on your lips. “Don't miss me too much, princess.”

And with that, he slid down the roof of your house, hanging off the edge for a moment before dropping down and landing perfectly on his feet.

He shot you a smirk over his shoulder as he hopped into his Camaro, tossing his shirt onto the passenger seat. You fell back onto your bed as the roar of his engine grew quieter and quieter until only the sound of the wind and the cicadas could be heard.

Your heart was still beating stupidly fast, and you couldn't help the giddy, breathless chuckle that left you. You just did the exact thing you promised yourself you'd never do again. Things certainly didn't go according to plan, but it felt so good that you didn't even care.

As sleep slowly claimed you the last thing you saw was the hungry look Billy gave you, the feeling of his lips still lingering on yours.

## 6. .:Stupid:.

The next few weeks went by as usual, at least that's what it seemed like to the rest of the people in your school. Billy would still come up to you and be an annoying little shit, and you'd tell him to fuck off. To the outside eye it seemed like he was just playing a losing game.

"Dude, I don't even know why you're still trying to get at that," Tommy said to him one day, "I mean, do you really want to stick your dick in crazy?"

With you, it seemed like you couldn't count the number of girls who gave you dirty looks in the hallway. Billy's advances towards other girls became few and then none besides you.

"What's so special about her anyways?" they'd jeer out of jealousy.

"Don't worry," another would say, "He'll drop her as soon as he gets bored."

You would only smirk to yourself as you walked by. They had no idea.

You were surprised no one had picked up on it yet- the way both of you would disappear from your regular tables at lunch, coming back looking just a little more disheveled than when you had left. Stealing kisses behind the gym and during the end of passing period when everyone had already gone to class. The dark marks on your necks he hid with the collar of his leather jacket and you with your denim one.

He would always sneak into your room like he did that night, sometimes to talk and sometimes to do things that required little talking at all. It's gotten heated before, but surprisingly he had never pushed you to do anything you weren't comfortable with. In other words, you hadn't gone all the way.

Part of you wanted to so badly, but the other part was just nervous to hook up with the school's most infamous playboy. You didn't want to get your hopes up, but you've never seen Billy try so hard to get a girl even in the short time you've known each other, You've seen him

make passes at girls before. Of course, the usual reaction was for them to practically get on their knees for him right then and there, but in the rare case he was rejected he just brushed it off, starting to flirt with their friends or whatever girl was walking past at the time. But with you he was more than persistent. After your kiss in your room it seemed like he stopped flirting with other girls all together, but what did that really mean? What was this thing between you two anyways? You'd never really talked about it, and you've been hiding it from everyone at school. You understood why he might want to, you weren't exactly popular among his dipshit friends.

All these thoughts and questions swirled around in your mind as you sat at the breakfast table.

“Uh oh she's thinking, guys. Everybody run,” Kyle grinned.

“Shut it,” you huffed, pushing him away from you.

He laughed as he swiped up his bowl of cereal from the table, walking over to the fridge to get the milk. As he did your eyes widened with realization.

“Oh my god, those are my pants,” you said incredulously, staring at the tight fitting leather on your brother. “Dad!”

Your father turned around to look, quickly regretting it and swiveling in the other direction to engross himself in the newspaper.

“Oh come on, (Y/n), they look so much better on me,” Kyle said, posing for emphasis.

You groaned, your forehead meeting the table.

“By the way, can I take the car today?”

Your head shot up at your brother's words.

“Absolutely not,” you said, “What, you take my pants and now you want to take my car too?”

“I'll be careful!” he promised, “Please?”



“No,” you said, “I don't want to die because my idiot brother can't drive anything bigger than a golf cart.”

“You won't have to be in the car,” he said.

“What?” you said in confusion, “How do you expect me to get to school then?”

Kyle's grin turned dangerous as he nodded his head towards the window by the front door. As if on cue, a car horn beeped twice outside your house. You jogged over to the door, opening it to find Billy in his Camaro with Max in the back. As you ran over to him he rolled his window down.

“What the hell are you doing here?” you said. Despite your words, you couldn't help the dumb grin on your face.

“I'm giving my girlfriend a ride to school,” he said, as if it was obvious.

You and Max nearly choked at the same time.

Billy chuckled at the look of surprise on your face.

“Yeah,” he said, one hand on the wheel, “Least I could do. You're my girl.”

You hated how your heart pounded in your chest as he said that. In that moment it was like every worry your mind had been racing with a few minutes ago had disappeared.

“You're an idiot, Billy Hargrove,” you said.

“So I've been told,” he grinned.

You turned around to see Kyle smirking at you and you sighed.

“Don't kill anyone,” you said, tossing him your keys before climbing in the passenger seat of Billy's car.

Billy gave you a quick kiss before you could even reach for your seat belt, and you saw Max mimic gagging in the rear view mirror.

You spent the drive in comfortable silence, and Max was slightly surprised, looking between the two of you. Billy hadn't yelled at her at all, and he was usually in the worst mood in the mornings. Maybe this thing you had going on could be a nice change of pace. To Max it seemed like you were a breath of fresh air for Billy, and she'd rarely seen her step brother in a serious relationship before.

As Billy pulled up to his usual parking spot you could see Tommy and Carol on the other side of the street, waiting for him. You felt a pit start to form in the bottom of your stomach.

"Are you sure this is a good idea?" you asked, "Everyone's going to know."

"That's sort of the point," he said, flicking you lightly on the forehead.

You pouted, swatting his hand away.

"You know what I mean," you said.

"Just ignore them," he said, "Trust me."

Those were dangerous words, but somehow you found yourself following them.

You got out of the car hesitantly, Max following. She skated away towards the middle school as Billy got out of the driver's seat.

Everyone's eyes were on you, some shocked but mostly jealous. You wanted to shrink away into the ground, but before you could backtrack on your confidence Billy snaked his arms around your waist and pulled you into a kiss. You could practically hear the gasps around you and you resisted the urge to roll your eyes at both them and Billy's flair for the dramatic. Even though he's kissed you a hundred times, it was always in secret. Now you were letting the whole school see, and as nervous as you were, it was exhilarating and almost sweet of Billy to show he wasn't embarrassed to be with you.

You moved up to sit on the hood of his car, and your hands found their way into his hair. As his teeth tugged at your lower lip you pushed him away slightly.

“Billy, we're right next to a middle school,” you scolded him. He laughed at that.

“I told you the point was for everyone to know, remember?”

Meanwhile Max was looking around for her usual group, sighing as she found them huddled around Lucas' binoculars while they stared at you and Billy in shock.

“What are you idiots up to now?” Max said.

Everyone jumped as she suddenly came up behind them and Dustin pulled her down behind the fence so she wouldn't be seen.

“Can you believe this?” Mike scoffed, “How could (Y/n) fall for that asshole? No offense,” he said, looking at Max.

“None taken, it's the truth,” Max replied.

“No, no, no! This isn't how it was supposed to go,” Dustin said, “She's supposed to be with Steve!”

The boy in question was currently standing with his friends on the other side of the parking lot, watching as Billy scooped you up into his arms. You squealed when he did, telling him to put you down in between fits of laughter. Steve knew he had no right to be jealous, but his heart twisted as he watched you two together. He felt stupid for not saying anything to you sooner, and now he might have just lost his chance with you for good.

The rest of the day was the most tolerable one you could remember going through in a while. You couldn't explain it, but you just felt lighter. Maybe it was because you had something to look forward to afterwards.

Billy had pulled you aside at lunch, saying he wanted to take you to a record shop after school and then grab some dinner. You, of course, accepted, and you spent the rest of the lunch period listening to your favorite bands together in the old music room.

Tommy and Carol noticed Billy's absence; Everyone did, really. When the King of Hawkins High wasn't around it was a noticeable change.

Mostly it was quieter and people were less terrified of waiting in line at the cafeteria.

Tommy's eyes narrowed as he caught Billy sneaking back into his next period in the dark while the class was watching a movie on the projector screen. Through the window to the hallway he could just make out your figure retreating back to your own class with the hall pass in your hand. Needless to say he wasn't happy in the slightest.

When the last bell rang students flooded the hallways, eager to go home, but none of them as eager as you and Billy due to the promise of a date. Billy stopped by his locker, carelessly tossing his textbooks inside before shutting it only to find Tommy and Carol in front of him.

"We need to talk, Hargrove," Tommy said.

"About what?" Billy asked casually, playing it off. He started to walk back towards the parking lot but Tommy cut in front of him, blocking his way.

"You know what," the older boy glared, "What the fuck was that stunt this morning? Don't tell me you're actually dating that freak."

Billy bit back a scowl as Tommy insulted you, and he managed a forced reply instead of immediately punching him.

"Don't worry about it," Billy said.

"Well I'm going to if you're actually going through with this," Tommy said, "I hope you know if you're seen with her for more than one day you can kiss your reputation goodbye. People are already starting to talk."

Panic seeped into his mind like a lethal injection. That struck a chord in Billy harder than he'd like to admit. He felt so stupid for giving a damn about what anyone else in this shitty town thought of him, but deep down he craved the popularity, the notoriety. His King title gave him something he'd rarely ever known in his life- respect. People bent over backwards for him, did anything he asked. Guys would kill to be friends with him, girls would kill to sleep with him.

But was that really him? He knew it wasn't. It was all just a front. A mask he used to forget all the shit he had to deal with and manipulate people into doing what he wanted. And for some reason he found himself taking that mask off when he was with you. You didn't care about his popularity or his social circle or even about him when you first met. You weren't afraid to call him out on his bullshit. You were unapologetically yourself, and that's what Billy liked about you.

But in that moment, surrounded by his friends like some kind of intervention, his old self got the better of him. If he just said something to get them off his back he could go out with you without having to deal with them.

"I told you not to worry about it," Billy said, "It's nothing serious, man."

You bounded down the main hallway, a small smile on your face as you finished up at your locker and made your way over to the front where Billy's car was parked. Everyone else had gone home by now, the halls quickly clearing within ten minutes after school was over. However you heard some voices travel down the rows of lockers and you stopped in your tracks as you recognized them.

You could hear Billy laughing, but it didn't sound like it usually did. It sounded forced, unnatural.

"You sure about that?" you heard Tommy say.

What were they talking about?

"Of course," Billy said, "She's a tough one to crack, I'll give you that, but I'll have her soon enough. If not, it's on to the next one, right? Plenty of fish in the sea."

The words left a bad taste in his mouth, and Billy grimaced as Tommy clapped him on the shoulder. It was nothing worse than what he'd normally say around them, but for some reason he started to feel guilty for saying something like that about you, even if it wasn't true.

"That's what I thought," Tommy said, "Fuck 'em and leave 'em, right?"

Especially girls like her, it's all they're good for.”

Billy hesitated before saying anything. Part of him wanted to bash Tommy's head into the lockers until he stopped moving, but he forced his anger down and grit his teeth hard.

“Yeah, right,” he said, regretting the words as soon as they left his mouth.

'At least now they'll be out of the way,' he thought, 'As long as she never finds out I said that, we can go on like normal.'

But you'd already heard him, and the damage was done.

You felt like your feet were cemented into the floor, slowly pulling you down like quicksand. It took you a moment to process what he just said, but once you did you felt like vomiting.

Stupid.

Stupid, stupid, so fucking stupid.

This wasn't any different from all the other times. How could you think Billy actually gave a damn about you? That he would change for you? People like him couldn't change. . . you figured you should have known that much after all the shit your exes put you through. But you still fell for it- the same act he probably pulled with all the girls he wanted to sleep with while telling them she was the only one.

You willed yourself to move and you turned around, heading off in the opposite direction. You gave your brother the keys since Billy gave you a ride this morning, and he'd already gone home. You pushed open the door, feeling numb despite the hot sun beating down on you.

You quickly took out a few quarters and put them into the school's payphone on the brick wall, dialing your home phone.

“Come on, pick up,” you pleaded to yourself. When the dial tone repeated itself one too many times you got the voice message response and you slammed the phone back on the wall with a clang!

How the hell were you supposed to get home?

Suddenly a pair of arms snaked around your waist and you tensed up, knowing full well who it was, turning around and pushing his body away from you.

As soon as Billy saw your expression he knew something was wrong, and he hoped to whatever force was out there in the universe that it wasn't because of what he thought it was.

“What’s wrong, princess?” he asked.

Billy stood there with his head cocked to the side slightly, looking confused, and that only made you angrier.

He's playing dumb.

Well, dumber.

“Don’t princess me, Hargrove,” you glared at him.

His stomach dropped as you call him by his last name, something you hadn’t done since he kissed you that first night.

“I was right about you,” you said, “You're just like the rest of them, stringing me along and manipulating me until you got me to have sex with you and then you'd go on pretending I never existed. I don't know why I thought you'd be any different. . . I don't know why I was stupid enough to think I was different to you, either.”

Every one of your words was a punch to the gut to Billy, but he stood there and took it, because he knew he deserved it. As he saw tears start to well up in your eyes he couldn't think of anything to say. Certainly not any kind of excuse.

You grit your teeth, turning away from him as you wiped the burning tears from your face. There was no way you'd let him see you cry. Not him.

“You're my girl,” you chuckled humorlessly, quoting his words from just a few hours ago, “What a load of bullshit.”

"I fucked up," Billy said, exasperated.

"Damn straight you did!" you shouted, your head whipping back around to look at him. His heart stopped when your eyes met his, and all he could think about was how much pain you were in and the fact that he was the cause of it.

"You know I tried to stay away from you because I just knew this was how it would end," you said, "I didn't want this to be serious. I didn't want to hear you say that I was your girl, because I didn't want to feel like shit when you went back on your word. So congratulations, Billy Hargrove, you've checked off every regret I thought this might turn out to be in a single afternoon."

He tried to say something as he watched you start to walk away, but the words caught in his throat. He started to walk after you, his pace quickening as he reached for your arm.

Your head snapped to look at him as you twisted yourself around, grabbing his wrist before he could get to you.

"Don't fucking touch me," you said, biting the inside of your cheek as your voice came out sounding a lot more broken than you'd wanted. Still, you pressed on.

"Find another bitch to fuck with, Hargrove," you said, shoving him away, "Plenty of fish in the sea, right?"

You turned around, stuffing your hands in the pockets of your jacket as you started to walk home. You were miles away and it would take you hours, but you didn't care as long as it got you away from Billy. As the anger drained out of your body sadness replaced it, and with your back turned to him you finally allowed yourself to let the tears roll down your cheeks.

Billy could tell you were crying even if he couldn't see you, and he felt like the scum of the earth. When you disappeared around the street corner he clenched his fists at his sides so hard his nails nearly broke skin. He'd just ruined possibly the best thing to ever happen to him and for what? His stupid high school reputation? His friends that didn't give two shits about him?



Before he knew what was happening his fist collided with the brick tile of the wall, a sickening crack ringing out through the empty parking lot as he sucked in air through his teeth, looking down at his now-bloody knuckles.

“Fuck,” he seethed under his breath, hating himself more with each passing second.

Stupid.

## 7. .:Conflicted:.

Your expression was blank as you slowly walked in the general direction of your house, kicking a small pebble across the dirt road. It wasn't really a rational plan to just walk home. Hawkins was small, but you lived on the other side of town, and it would be way past sunset before you even made it to your neighborhood on foot.

As the sounds of people talking around you grew louder you looked up as you were crossing near town square to see the lights of Starcourt Mall, brighter than ever. You bit your lip as you looked around you, trying to avoid seeing anyone from school. Suddenly, your eyes drifted to the main part of the mall, landing on that same blue and striped striped sign you'd noticed your first day back in Hawkins.

You knew Steve would be there, but you were out of options at this point. Quickly deciding the possible payoff was worth the risk, you found yourself swinging open the door to Scoops Ahoy, the bell on the door frame ringing out as you did.

As soon as Steve saw you walk in he was worried. Your eyes were red from crying and devoid of that little sparkle that always seemed present in them. Your shoes were covered in dust from your trek over here, and you knew you probably looked just as shitty as you felt.

“(Y/n)? What's wrong?” Steve asked, his brows knitting together.

“It's fine,” you said, “Just. . . can I use your guys' phone? It'll be quick, I promise.”

“Uh, yeah,” Steve said, “It's in the back.”

You thanked him quietly and pushed open the door to the storage and break room, leaving Steve and Robin alone in the front.

As soon as you disappeared Robin leaned in to whisper to Steve.

“This is your chance, dingus,” she said.

“What the hell are you talking about?” Steve's eyes widened.

“Oh come on, don't act like you haven't been obsessed with her since she got back here,” Robin said, rolling her eyes. Steve's face flushed red.

“'Obsessed' is not the right word,” he grumbled.

“Sure,” Robin said, unconvinced, “In any case, you need to make your move right now or you're screwed.”

“I'm already screwed, Robin,” Steve said, “She'd with Billy now, for some reason. . .” he said that last part under his breath, and Robin bit back a chuckle as he did.

“Listen, it's not too late. I'll bet you five dollars she's upset because something happened with Billy.”

“Five?” Steve said, a brow raising, “You're on. And you know why? Because they were in their own little universe of gag inducing cuddles this morning. He would have to seriously fuck up to make her cry.”

“And you think he's incapable of that?” Robin scoffed.

Steve went silent for a moment, but he didn't exactly get the chance to think too deeply as you came out from the backroom.

Once again you had dialed your home phone and once again you wanted to slam your head into the wall when it went straight to voice message.

“Thanks,” you said, getting ready to leave and make the long walk back home.

“Uh, wait!” Steve said, a little too fast.

“Yeah?” You turned around to look at him.

“It's just. . . look,” Steve took a deep breath before he spoke, “I know something's wrong even if you say it isn't, and you don't have to talk about it if you don't want to. But I'm your friend and I hate seeing you sad, so if there's someone I need to beat the shit out of, please tell me.”

As you stared at him you looked for any sign of insincerity in his dark eyes but found none. And just like that your walls started crumbling. You felt tears start to well up in your eyes again, and you stifled a sob as they spilled over.

Steve started to panic as he saw you cry, but when you pulled him in for a hug he felt the tension leave his shoulders. He gingerly wrapped his arms around you, resting his chin on the top of your head. He inhaled the faint scent of your shampoo, stroking your hair gently as you cried into his chest. Your bodies seemed to fit perfectly together, and Steve wondered if you could feel it too. Everything about this just felt. . . right.

“Something happened with Billy,” you admitted, wiping away your tears.

Robin smirked at Steve from behind you, mouthing 'I told you' before pulling five dollar bills from Steve's tip jar.

Steve rolled his eyes, pulling his focus back to you.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“It's kind of a long story,” you mumbled.

“We got all night,” Steve said. Suddenly an idea popped into his head, “Oh, wait, I have just the thing!”

Before you could protest you were being lead into one of the booths while Steve started scooping ice cream into a large bowl. He topped it with whipped cream, caramel sauce, hot fudge, and a cherry before setting it down on the table and sliding into the booth next to you.

“The USS Butterscotch Supreme,” he grinned proudly, producing two spoons from his apron pocket, “And don't even think about saying 'I can't' because it's on me.”

A small laugh escaped you and Steve's smile grew just a little wider.

“I think this is just an excuse for you to eat free ice cream from your own store,” you said.

"You caught me," Steve said, scooping a spoonful of fudge into his mouth, "Now what happened?"

You told him everything- how Billy kissed you in your bedroom weeks ago and was sort of seeing you in secret since then, how you heard Tommy, Carol, and him talking in the hallway, and how you were basically left stranded after your fight since he'd given you a ride that morning.

"Hold on, you walked all the way here from school?" Steve asked, surprised.

"Yep," you sighed, shoving another spoonful of the sundae into your mouth, "That's why I asked to use your phone, so I could call for a ride. I gave my stupid brother the keys and now he won't pick up the home phone so he's probably still out. I'm not sure if I should be mad that he didn't take the car straight home or worried that he might be out committing arson somewhere."

"Probably both," Steve laughed.

After a few moments of eating ice cream in silence Steve set his spoon down.

"God, I seriously want to punch Billy in his stupid face right now," he said.

"Yeah, me too. But the worst part is that I still really like him," You chuckled weakly as you picked at the cherry on top of the sundae, "Pretty pathetic, huh?"

"I mean, your words, not mine," Steve said playfully.

You shook your head, laughing as you took your last bite of ice cream.

Steve was angry, that much went without saying. Billy had always pissed him off, but hearing that he hurt you? Steve was livid. The fact that Billy, the rudimentary asshole, had somehow ended up with you made him think that maybe karma wasn't a real thing after all. But not only did Billy manage to steal your heart, he threw it away in an instant, and that made Steve more mad than anything. If he ever got

the chance to be with you he'd never want to let you go, much less disrespect you and say shit behind your back just to impress his stupid friends. But he forced all of his emotions down for your sake. He knew you wouldn't want someone starting a fight on your behalf, it's not the kind of person you were. You handled your own problems, sometimes to fault, but your tenacity and resilience were some of the many things he liked about you.

"I should probably get going soon," you sighed, snapping him out of his thoughts, "I've still got a long walk ahead of me."

Steve looked at you like you'd just grown a second head.

"I can give you a ride," he said as if it was obvious.

"Really?"

"Of course," Steve said, "You think I'd make you walk home in the dark? I'm not that much of an asshole. . . anymore." he grinned as he nudged your shoulder.

Steve caught sight of movement in his peripheral vision and saw Robin waving her arms around behind you. As you leaned over to grab your backpack Steve mouthed 'What?' Robin rolled her eyes, pointing to you and making a 'go on' gesture with her hands.

"Um, hey," Steve said suddenly.

"Hi?" you chuckled.

"Do you want to go see a movie?" he asked.

Robin face palmed hard and you turned at the sound, only to see her whistling and leaning ever so casually on the counter when you did.

"N-not like, right now," Steve stuttered out, "Obviously, that's crazy. You probably have things to do when you get home. I meant, like, later. Any time you're not busy if you even want to--"

"I'm free for the rest of the night," you said, cutting his rambling off, "And I'd love to."

Steve's heart pounded in his chest as you agreed and he had to mentally slap himself to get out of his head.

'This isn't a date,' he told himself, 'She just broke up with Billy, don't be a douchebag.'

"I, uh, kind of don't have money right now, though," you admitted, bringing Steve back to reality.

"Don't worry about it," he said, a smirk tugging at his lips, "Neither do I."

He lead you by the hand to the back room and looked over his shoulder before unlocking the panel on the wall that lead to the storage passage.

"After you," he grinned.

You couldn't believe it, you could see the lights of the movie theater flickering underneath the door at the end of the hallway.

"Didn't think you were one to break company policy," you snickered.

"Hey, I can be bad sometimes," he said, biting the inside of his cheek immediately after. Did he really just say that? Luckily for him you just laughed before starting to head down the hall.

"I'll catch up with you," Steve said, "Just give me a second."

He turned to Robin and panicked slightly.

"I'm so sorry, I didn't even think about my shift-"

"I'll cover you," Robin said, "This is the first girl in a while that's actually made you feel something. It's written all over your face, lover boy. So go get her."

Steve's eyes twinkled with silent thanks as he bounded down the hall after you.

"Don't embarrass yourself too much!" Robin called after him.

As she watched Steve's back disappear into the theater she smiled to herself, taking out her whiteboard and placing the very first tally under "You rule".

Steve found you situated in the center of the back row, and he slid into the seat beside you.

"What'd I miss?" he asked.

"The main character's trying to bang his mom," you said. Steve nearly choked on his spit and you laughed at his expression.

"He went back in time and met his mom when she was his age," you explained, "Now he's trying to go back to his time."

"Wait, I thought the movie was called Back to the Future," Steve said in confusion.

"Well yeah," you said, "He's trying to go back to the future because since he's in the past the 'future' is technically the present which is his time."

Steve just looked at you, and you could practically see the gears struggling to turn in his head.

"Okay, it's official- You're way smarter than me," he said.

"You're just now noticing?" you grinned.

"You're mean," he said with a fake pout.

You both laughed, much to the chagrin of the viewers around you. Throughout the movie Steve would give the occasional useless but funny commentary. You actually ended up having a really nice time. This wasn't like the banter between you and Billy. With Steve everything was lighter- he was more carefree and loved making you laugh. You looked over to him at your side and smiled slightly. He was watching the movie with child like enthusiasm, that dumb little grin on his face illuminated only by the screen.

Never in a million years did you imagine you'd be at a movie with Steve Harrington, especially not tonight. If Billy wasn't such an ass



today you would've gone to that record shop across the street, making out in his car and getting some greasy diner food after. You bit your lip slightly. You didn't want to think about that right now.

Nonetheless you had an amazing time, and it was just what you needed to take your mind off things. Your day had been a hell of an emotional roller coaster, and as Steve pulled up to your house you couldn't wait to go to sleep.

He got out of the driver's seat, opening your door for you.

"Such a gentleman," you said, rolling your eyes.

"Well you know me," he chuckled.

As you reached your front door you turned to him, hands in your pockets.

"Thank you for tonight, Steve. Really," you said, "We should do that again sometime."

"Yeah," he said, suddenly finding the doormat really interesting.

Neither of you noticed how close you were until that moment. You could smell the warm caramel on his breath from the ice cream you two had shared, and your breath hitched as his face inched closer to yours. Before you could register what was happening Steve pressed his lips softly to yours. It seemed to last for an eternity but in reality it was no more than a second, because you both seemed to realize what you were doing at the same time.

You quickly pulled away from each other and Steve immediately felt guilty.

"Sorry," he said quietly.

"It's fine," you said at an equal volume, your head spinning.

"I should go," Steve said, turning around.

"Yeah," you agreed.

Part of Steve wanted you to ask him to stay, but he knew that was just a fleeting thought as the sound of your door closing echoed almost tauntingly in the night air.

Steve felt like shit. What the hell was he thinking? You told him you still had feelings for Billy and he goes and kisses you just a few hours later?

“God I'm such an idiot,” he groaned, kicking the tire of his car before climbing in and driving away.

You heard everything go quiet as he left, and as you lay in bed staring at the ceiling with millions of thoughts swirling through your head, you knew you wouldn't be getting any sleep that night.

When you walked into school the next day you could feel the eyes on you. News spread fast at Hawkins High, and unfortunately your love life was no exception. You tried to keep your head low and get to your first period as quickly as possible. Of course, the universe wouldn't let you be so lucky.

“(Y/n), I need to talk to you, please,” Steve said, running up to you. Kyle gave him a dirty look and he backed away slightly. “Look I shouldn't have-”

“Steve, please don't take this the wrong way, but I really don't want to talk to anyone right now,” you said, picking up your pace and wishing you had the ability to just teleport to your first period.

“Well if it isn't the Hawkins whore,” Tommy grinned, walking up to you. Carol was glued to his side as usual and Billy was right there with them, unable to meet your eyes.

'Great,' you thought. Couldn't you catch a break?

“Just ignore them,” Kyle said, gritting his teeth as he pulled you away and continuing to walk.

“Two hours after Billy and you go running to Harrington, huh?” Tommy continued, “Gotta say, I always knew you were a bitch but I

never took you for a slut. Guess looks can be deceiving.”

Steve's fists balled at his sides as Tommy said that, about to defend you when you spoke up for yourself.

“Does it really matter?” you spun around, eyeing at Billy who was still looking anywhere but at you, “It was nothing serious, right?”

As you quoted Billy's words he winced slightly and it gave you a bit of satisfaction to know he at least felt half as shitty as you.

“That doesn't change anything, slut,” Carol glared with an annoying pop of her gum.

“That's rich coming from you,” you snapped, “Don't you have a football team to milk somewhere else?”

“That's it,” Tommy growled, slamming you into the lockers by the lapels of your jacket. You grunted as the hard metal made contact with your back.

“Get off of her!” Kyle shouted, grabbing his arm. Tommy just scoffed, twisting around to sock your brother in the stomach. He gasped as the wind was knocked out of him and he stumbled to the floor.

You shoved Tommy off of you while he was off balance, running to your brother.

“Ouch,” Kyle chuckled weakly.

“You idiot, why did you do that?” you said, your eyes full of worry.

“You've always been the one protecting me,” he said, “I don't know, I just thought I'd try to do that for you. Guess it backfired.”

Even when he just got punched your brother always managed to crack a joke. You smiled down at him, but the moment was broken by Tommy's laughter.

“Aw, isn't that sweet?” he mocked, the rest of his group laughing along expect for Billy who didn't say a word.

You felt red hot anger start to burn in your chest as you turned around to face Tommy. Everyone went silent when they saw your expression. No one in the school had ever seen you that mad before.

“Listen to me, you sorry sack of shit,” you said, your voice deathly calm, “Don't you ever touch my brother again, you understand me?”

“Or what?” Tommy smirked, getting in your face.

You grit your teeth so hard you thought they'd break, your nails breaking threads in the cuffs of your jacket.

“He's not worth it,” Kyle said, placing a hand on your shoulder.

You sighed through your nose, taking a deep breath.

“Yeah,” you said, “I know.”

You turned around with your brother, starting to walk away. But Tommy wasn't going to let it end there.

“Yeah that's what I thought!” he taunted loudly, following your pace down the hall, “Just run away like you always did! You're all bark and no bite, (L/n). You'd never have the guts to-”

CRACK!

You whipped around, slamming your fist right into Tommy's face.

He howled in pain, recoiling as he held his bleeding nose.

“You bitch!” he snarled, charging at you. Your eyes narrowed as you stepped to the side, letting him run into the lockers, following up with a knee to his gut. It was like instinct took over you, and you hated it. This was the part of you that you wanted to leave behind, but in the moment you couldn't be bothered to care.

Before you knew it there were teachers out in the hallway, pulling you two away from each other. Well, more like pulling you away from him. It was a fairly one-sided encounter.

“What the hell is going on here?” the principal asked, his arms

crossed.

“She just punched me!” Tommy said, playing victim.

“He hit my brother,” you countered.

“Now, miss (L/n), violence isn't always the answer,” the principal said in his usual condescending tone that drove you crazy, “If you really did punch him first you have to be held accountable. Besides, even if he hit you first, you should never respond by hitting back.”

“So I'm just supposed to sit there and let someone beat the shit out of me?” you said incredulously.

“Miss (L/n)!” the principal gasped at your language.

You scoffed, pulling away from the science teacher's weak hold and heading towards the door.

“I don't have to listen to this bullshit,” you said, digging for your keys in your bag, “I already know I'm suspended,” you called over your shoulder, “And don't bother calling the house, because when my dad finds out what really happened he'll go ballistic on your asses.”

You ignored the protesting shouts of the faculty and the sound of Steve and Billy calling your name as you got into your car and headed towards the nearest gas station. You needed a smoke, and it wasn't as if it'd be your first relapse of bad choices in the last few weeks.

You ended up a mile north at a 7-11 just outside the Hawkin's county line where you knew you could get a package for free. You haphazardly parked your car outside and walked into the store, heading over to the cashier.

“(Y/n) is that you? Holy shit!” the boy at the register smiled widely.

“Yeah,” you said, giving him a tight-lipped smile, “It's good to see you, Jason.”

“You know it's on me. Need a light?” he asked, already getting you a pack of Marlboros from behind the counter.

“Yeah, thanks,” you said.

As you started tearing the plastic off of the box you spotted a rough-looking figure in the back of the store, grumbling to himself. His clothes were charred, somehow, and he looked like he hadn't slept in days. Your brows knit together as you recognized who it was.

“Hopper?”

## 8. .:Three Runaways and a Russian:.

### Notes for the Chapter:

Holy shit, it's been so long since I've looked over this story! I found a half completed draft of this chapter in my old files and had a sudden influx of inspiration to finish it. At the very least I wanted to release this chapter, even if I don't end up continuing or finishing this story. Thank you to everyone who's read this trainwreck so far <3

"Hopper?"

The surly man turned to you with a look of equal surprise.

"(Y/n)? What are you doing here?" Hopper asked, eyes narrowing, "Hold on, aren't you supposed to be in school?"

"Aren't you supposed to be at the police station?" you countered.

He sighed in exasperation and shook his head.

"Listen, kid, I don't have time for this," he said.

"Well what are you doing?" you asked.

"Nothing," he said crossly.

"Uh, *that* doesn't look like nothing," you said, pointing over to the Slurpee machine where a man with dark curly hair and glasses was inspecting it in wonder. He was handcuffed but still held a large empty cup in his left hand, eyebrows furrowed as he stared at the frozen drink move in circles on the inside of the machine.

"He's an extremely dangerous criminal," Hopper said, "I'm. . . transporting him."

"Okay, then why is Joyce here?" you asked. She was standing next to the unfamiliar man trying to show him how the dispenser worked. At that moment she turned to Hopper only to make eye contact with

you.

“(Y/n)?” she said, eyes wide.

“Hi Mrs. Byers,” you waved awkwardly. What the hell was going on here?

“You got her mixed up with this too?” Joyce chided Hopper, her expression hardening as she walked over.

“I didn't get her mixed up in jack shit,” Hopper said incredulously, “She just doesn't know how to mind her own business.”

“Yeah, I'm right here, guys,” you said in annoyance, “And sorry if I 'intruded' but you're in a 7-11, not your office, so if I see a guy in literal handcuffs I'm going to poke around because that's suspicious and you know it.”

Upon seeing you point at him the man in glasses smiled at you, waving as much as he could while his hands were restrained. He then went back to fiddling with the Slurpee machine and you walked over to him, taking the cup from his hand.

“You have to press down on it,” you said, holding the lever down and filling his cup with the cherry flavor. You stuck in a straw and held it out to him which he accepted with a wide grin, nodding his head.

“What's your name anyways?” you asked him.

He just tilted his head, spluttering slightly as he turned to Joyce.

“His name is Alexei,” Joyce clarified.

“Hold on, does this guy not speak English?” you asked in disbelief.

“Uh, n-no,” the man said, able to read some context from the tone of your voice, “No English.” His words were followed by him speaking in a foreign language and making gestures with his hands.

“I'm sorry, where the hell did you find this random Russian guy?” you turned to Hopper for an explanation.



"Top secret police business," he said, frowning, "Butt out."

"So I'm not allowed to know about this 'top secret police business' but Joyce is?" you crossed your arms.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Hopper raised his voice.

"I'm just implying that some favoritism is being applied when it comes to breaking your precious rules," you scoffed.

"Trust me, kid, you have no idea what the big picture looks like right now, okay? A lot of shit went down when you were gone that you couldn't even begin to imagine. This is dangerous."

"I'm not a kid anymore so don't call me that," you glared, "And if this is so dangerous then don't I deserve to know?"

"No," Hopper said coldly, "Now listen to me and drive your ass back to Hawkins High before I have you turned in for truancy."

His words made the situation painfully ironic when you all turned towards the front of the gas station as the roar of an all too familiar engine rang out. Billy's blue Camaro skid to a harsh stop as he climbed out of the driver's seat, running over to the door as he saw you through the glass. Once you got over the initial shock your mood soured as Billy made his way inside.

"(Y/n) I have to talk to you-"

"Save it," you glared at Billy, cutting his sentence short, "Hold on, did you follow me?!"

"Please just hear me out," he said, a rare crack of desperation in his voice, "Listen I'm-"

"What? You're *sorry*?" you scoffed, "You're not sorry. You clearly didn't give a shit about me from the beginning, so if you think everything's going to go back to the way it was after some half assed apology then think again."

"What the hell is this?" Hopper asked Joyce off to the side.

“Lover's quarrel,” Joyce whispered back, “Just let them talk it out.”

“Well if you won't let me apologize then what the fuck do you expect me to do?” Billy said in frustration.

“Nothing!” you shouted back, “Don't talk to me, don't talk *about* me, just move on to your next little conquest and you'll forget all about this in a week.”

You felt a sharp pang in your chest as the words left your mouth. You didn't want to believe them but you felt like it was true. There was no changing Billy Hargrove, and even if there was, why would you of all people be the one to be able to do it? You weren't anything special, but Billy felt the exact opposite.

He didn't get the chance to say anything back, though, because at that moment the sound of a second car engine was heard as you saw Steve's car pull up to the gas station.

“Oh, you've got to be shitting me,” you groaned.

Steve was panting as he ran inside to the gas station, barely catching his breath before speaking.

“(Y/n), I wanted to-”

“I'm sorry, I thought I made it clear that you two are the last people I want to talk to right now,” you said coldly.

“Wait, hold on, what's going on here? Why aren't any of you at school?” Joyce asked, coming to the realization it was 12:34 on a weekday.

“I broke some stupid guy's nose, it's a long story,” you mumbled, “What I didn't expect was these two idiots following me.” You glared at them, trying to put as much distance between you two as you could.

“I was worried about you,” Steve said, causing Billy to roll his eyes.

“Oh please,” Billy scoffed under his breath.

Steve's expression hardened as he turned to Billy.

"Hey, you don't get to say shit," he said, "You're the one who led her on and made her cry in the first place."

"Led her on?" Billy's voice rose as he glared in Steve's face, "Listen, pretty boy, if I remember correctly I beat the shit out of you a little less than a year ago. You asking for a rematch?"

"Yeah, maybe I am," Steve glared, "Because I'm sick and tired of you treating my friend like shit."

"Oh, 'your friend', huh?" Billy chuckled, "Bet you wish you were more than that, don't you, Harrington?"

"Both of you cut it out!"

Something in you snapped as you forcefully separated the pair, keeping them on opposite sides of the isle. Silence blanketed the rest of the convenience store as you spoke.

"I never asked for either of you to follow me here," you said, feeling a wave of emotional exhaustion take you over, "As a matter of fact, I asked to be left alone, so you two need to get that through your thick fucking skulls because this is seriously the last thing I need right now."

Alexei just stood innocently by, wondering what all the yelling was about and if he could do anything to help.

Through all the commotion none of you noticed the way Hopper was staring out the convenience store window, his stomach dropping as he saw a tiny figure on the road drawing nearer. Upon closer inspection he could see the silhouette of a man on a motorcycle.

"Get down," Hopper said suddenly, not taking his eyes off the man.

His words made you freeze, all your senses on high alert as you could feel something was wrong.

"Wait, what?" Steve said in confusion.

"I said GET DOWN!" Hopper shouted, pulling you and Joyce to the floor just as a gunshot rang out and the windowpane shattered into pieces. Shards of glass fell onto your shoulders as you ducked behind one of the isles and panic quickly settled in.

You could feel Hopper dragging you further away from the door, your body frozen in fear.

"Listen to me, you need to get the hell out of here, *all* of you," Hopper said.

"Hopper, what the fuck is going on?" you asked, your hands shaking.

"I don't have time to explain," he said quickly, "Joyce, get them to Murray's house as fast as you can."

"What about you?" you said, "If you think we're leaving you here like some shitty action movie you've got another thing coming."

"I'll buy you some time," he said, "And besides, he's after me, not you, but that doesn't mean he won't shoot you if you get in his way. Do you understand? Get out of here!"

Before you could say anything back Hopper was thrown back against the wall by a muscular man in a leather jacket. Joyce immediately grabbed you by the arm and started pulling you away along with Steve and Billy. You could hear them yelling but it felt like you were hearing things underwater. Your heartbeat pounded rapidly in your ears as you turned around, every nerve in your body shouting at you to run.

Your heart nearly stopped as another gunshot rang out in the store and the tile cracked beneath your feet as the bullet landed a mere few feet from where you'd been standing seconds earlier.

"Don't you dare, you son of a bitch!" Hopper growled as he tackled the man to the floor, getting a few solid hits in. The man grunted as his back harshly met the ground, his head slamming into one of the shelves. As Joyce turned you around again to get out you could only pray that Hopper would be okay.

"There's no way we can fit everyone into one car," you said as you

neared the exit to the parking lot, "Where's Hopper's police van?"

Joyce looked off to the side.

"Oh, um, it's. . . on fire in the middle of the woods."

"It's *what?!?*"

"I promise I'll explain everything to you once we're safe," Joyce said, "Right now we need to figure out how to get everyone out of here."

You turned over your shoulder and winced as the man landed a solid hit to Hopper's gut, knocking the wind out of him and making him stumble back into a rack of chips. Hopper grunted in pain but immediately fired back with a punch of his own, his right swing hitting the man square in the jaw. Hopper took the chance to follow up a knee to the man's gut, knocking him down with one last hit, although he knew he wouldn't stay down for long.

As Hopper struck him down you caught a flash of silver fly out of the man's jacket pocket and skid across the floor. You stared at the keys for a moment before your gaze flew up to the Harley parked outside the gas station.

*'This is a stupid idea,'* you told yourself, but in the moment it was the best you could do.

"Take my car," you said to Joyce, tossing her your keys, "I'm jacking his ride."

Joyce, Steve, and Billy looked at you like you'd just sprouted wings.

"Oh no you're not, it's way too dangerous," Joyce said, incredulously, "He'll be close enough to shoot you if you make a run for it now."

"I'll go around the outside," you said, "If Hopper keeps him distracted I can make it."

"Have you ever even ridden a motorcycle before?" Billy tried to reason with you.

"As a matter of fact I have," you said, your eyes narrowing. You

didn't mention the fact that it was just one time with your dad years ago but hey, you were a fast learner.

"Just trust me on this," you said, "Think about it, even if we do manage to get out of here he'll catch up to us in no time on a motorcycle. If we take his transportation away he won't be able to find us again, or at least it'll make it harder."

Joyce swallowed hard, shaking her head.

"I can't believe I'm about to let you do this," she said.

"I'll see you in ten seconds," you promised, "Get everyone in the car and we'll pick up Hopper on the way out."

"Be careful," Steve said, and despite you still being mad at him the life or death situation compelled you to say:

"You too."

And with that, Joyce started to lead everyone outside to the parking lot towards your car.

You forced down any doubt you had in your mind and took a deep breath before running towards where Hopper and the man were fighting. You slid to a stop as you snatched the keys off the ground and made a break for the front of the store.

The man seemed to notice what you did as he snarled and reached for his gun, but Hopper was too quick. In one swift movement he knocked the gun out of the man's hand grabbed him by the collar of his shirt, throwing him as far away from you as he could.

You thanked Hopper silently as you put the keys in the ignition, the engine roaring to life. Your heart pounded in your ears as you leveled yourself on the motorcycle. You spotted Hopper out of the corner of your eye as he sprinted towards the store front, Alexei practically flying behind him in his grip. The Russian let out a small yelp as Hopper threw him unceremoniously into the backseat of the car, his body sprawled across Billy and Steve.

"Floor it, Joyce," Hopper huffed, scrambling into the passenger's seat.

She didn't need to be told twice. The smell of burning rubber drifted past you as the tires squealed, all the passengers forced backwards at the force of the sudden jolt of speed.

You leaned into the turn as you moved to follow the car, daring one last glance over your shoulder at the man in the leather jacket. He threw what remained of a shelf off of his shoulders as he staggered to his feet, his expression terrifying as he stared you down. With a deep breath you turned to the road, quickly catching up with your Jaguar and leaving the infuriated man behind.

“Woah woah hey, my fucking car is still back there!” Billy shouted as you sped away.

“Really, *that's* what you're concerned about right now?!” you shouted over the wind, tempted to reach around the car and slap him. Your focus was forcefully pulled back to the road as you felt the cycle waver, quickly adjusting your weight as you tried to get use to the feeling. You were suddenly acutely aware of the helmet you weren't wearing. You took a long draw of breath in through your nose as you tried to calm your buzzing nerves, your knuckles white as you gripped the handlebars.

“Alright, Hop. You wanna tell me what the hell that was about?”